REPORT RESUMES

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THE USE AND OVERUSE OF LITERARY CONVENTION. THE PLACE OF VALUES IN LITERATURE. LITERATURE CURRICULUM VI, TEACHER AND STUDENT VERSIONS.

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THE FIRST OF THESE TWO 12TH-GRADE UNITS IS DESIGNED TO SHOW STUDENTS THAT THE UNIMAGINATIVE OVERUSE OF LITERARY CONVENTIONS LEADS TO TRITENESS, VERBOSITY, AND DULLNESS. LESSONS ARE ORGANIZED BY GENRE AND FOCUS ON LITERARY SELECTIONS WHICH SHOW VARYING DEGREES OF ORIGINALITY IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF LITERARY CONVENTIONS. AMONG WORKS DISCUSSED ARE JEFFERS' "THE BLOODY SIRE," EDGAR GUEST'S "ALONG THE PATHS OF GLORY," MILTON'S "ON HIS BLINDNESS," AND STEINBECK'S "FLIGHT." THE SECOND UNIT, "THE PLACE OF VALUES IN LITERATURE," IS CONCERNED WITH HOW LITERATURE INEVITABLY PRESUPPOSES OR ESTABLISHES A SYSTEM OF VALUES. THE CLOSE ANALYSIS OF LITERARY SELECTIONS IS EMPHASIZED, AND LESSONS DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LITERARY WORKS WHICH ASSUME VALUES AND THOSE WHICH SHOW A CONFLICT OF VALUES. BLAKE'S "THE LAMB," VAUGHAN'S "THE WORLD," ARNOLD'S "DOVER BEACH," AND MELVILLE'S "BILLY BUDD," ARE AMONG SELECTIONS DISCUSSED, AND TOLSTOI'S "THREE ARSHINS OF LAND" IS REPRINTED. THE STUDENT VERSION INCLUDES STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, EXPLANATIONS OF MATERIALS, AND SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR PAPERS. THE TEACHER VERSION CONTAINS BACKGROUND MATERIALS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING PROCEDURES AND STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS. A TEST DESIGNED TO ACCOMPANY THE UNIT, "THE USE AND OVERUSE OF LITERARY CONVENTION," IS APPENDED. SEE ALSO ED 010 129 THROUGH ED 010 160, ED 010 803 THROUGH ED 010 832, TE 000 195 THROUGH TE 000 220, AND TE 000 227 THROUGH TE 000 249. (DL)

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THE USE AND OVERUSE OF CONVENTION

Literature Curriculum VI

The previous unit has shown that "difficulty arises when the reader gets an incomplete signal from the writer." This may be purely a matter of language or it may be a matter of different backgrounds of writer and reader.

Our comprehension of conventional symbols, of allusions, of basic structures such as tragedy, of many other frequently used elements provides an economical way for an author to communicate. For example, in Forster's "The Other Side of the Hedge," read in the eleventh grade, a reader with some literary background knows that the road is life, the dip in the water is baptism; no words need be expended to explain these standard symbols. Difficulty of understanding may result either from a confusing overturning of convention or from an unexplained use of a rather obscure convention, such as the gates of horn and ivory in Forster's story.

As was shown in the eleventh grade, a literary genre is really a collection of conventions which are usually grouped together. We might glance for a moment at the use of such conventions in Macbeth as a drama of the genre called tragedy. As a drama it takes advantage of such traditions as that one man may represent another on the stage, that time may be telescoped, that one stage area may be at times the heath, at times various areas of Macbeth's castle. The audience is also expected to assume such things as that characters tell them the truth of their feelings when they soliloquize, sleep-walk, or succumb to madness, that a man who is stabbed with a sword on stage is "dead" even if they still see color in his cheek and movement of breathing in his body, that a few soldiers clashing on stage represent a full-scale battle.

No words need be wasted telling the audience these things. Nor, since this is a tragedy, need they be told more than indirectly that Macbeth will die, that they should be watching for that in his character which makes his death inevitable, that the prophecies will be carried out, according to a tradition that students will clearly see to have developed out of Greek tragedy.

Such convention is of course useful and necessary to the author. It is nearly impossible to imagine a piece of literature existing in isolation from the body of conventions we have all acquired. In many cases such a work would obviously have to be much longer; it might also be impossible to portray in it some of the subtler concepts we expect of a good piece of writing. Yet there would be no point in a writer putting his words down on paper were he merely recombining the old conventions, not saying something new, not putting a new slant on the use of the old. It is the overuse of the old, of the conventions, which we describe as "trite" or "cliche." The trite work is built around a cliché, around a theme or plot which has been repeated so often as to become dull and empty of new meaning--such concepts as the victory of the righteous, the all-conquering power of young love.

How many works do nothing more than pound such old ideas home again! But we must remember that each is also used in worthwhile literature. Perhaps the word "used" is the key here. Could we perhaps assert that an author may skillfully "use" such clichés as tools--but that triteness comes in when the formula uses him, when it dictates what he says instead of helping him to say something more personal?

If this is true, we should be able to assert that, in the examples discussed above, Forster and Shakespeare have something new to say with their conventions. This is obviously true of Forster, who reverses the road convention to re-explore the carpe diem philosophy. It is less obviously true of Macbeth, yet this tragedy is profoundly original in its ambiguity over whether fate or the individual causes the tragedy, in the introduction of a woman like Lady Macbeth, in a large number of other twists and turns in the familiar plot line.

Perhaps we should repeat once again the statement by René Wellek and Austen Warren quoted in the eleventh grade materials: "Men's pleasure in a literary work is compounded of the sense of novelty and the sense of recognition" (Theory of Literature, p. 235). They go on to observe that the totally familiar is boring--but that the totally new would be unintelligible. "The good writer partly conforms to the genre as it exists, partly stretches it." And certainly this concept could be extended to the use of convention generally: the good writer is thoroughtly familiar with and ready to use convention when it suits his purpose, but he is equally willing to revise or discard it when it becomes dictatorial.

In attempting to communicate these concepts to students, it is necessary to remember that the borderline between triteness and skilled use of tradition is a thin one, nearly impossible to define, and one which will not be the same for readers of varied backgrounds. Recent attempts at "scientific" criticism have shown how nearly impossible it is to find absolutes in a field as subjective as literature. For everything we say about a piece of literature is really a remark upon the impression that the work makes upon us personally, upon our own minds. That impression will be colored by our past experience, including our reading--in other words, by our mind as it exists at the moment of reading the work in question.

This is true of every statement about literature; it is especially true of the question of triteness because the very term implies a comparison with past reading to determine whether the author has said anything new. Perhaps we could say that, in order to make an absolute statement about the originality of a work, one would have to compare it with everything else ever written. This is clearly an impossible ideal; yet it is also clear that the literary scholar approaches it more closely than the layman, the teacher more closely than the student.

For this reason, this present unit is chiefly designed around selections which are quite clearly trite or original, with few "borderline cases." You as teacher may to some degree have to impose your standards on the students, but of course this should be kept to an absolute minimum, with students reaching a just evaluation of the selections through your discussion, your questioning, your suggestion, not through your dictation. And it should be observed throughout that nothing is wrong with enjoying Guest or Riley or Longfellow as much as Housman or Keats or Arnold, so long as one recognizes that the latter had more to say which came from themselves, and that therefore their contributions to literature were greater. Once students have grasped these concepts in connection with the selections discussed in this unit, you will of course want to encourage them to extend such evaluation to their other reading.

To encourage students to form opinions on their own, fewer specific study questions are used in the Student Version than has been usual in past years. Students should be encouraged to evaluate the selections as thoroughly as they can before class discussion begins but should also leave their opinions open to modification during discussion. It might be worthwhile to help them develop the invaluable habit of writing down what they think of a work both before and after discussion. Discussion sessions are frequently more meaningful if each class member has previously clarified his ideas for himself--even if these ideas are wrong.

In addition to introductory remarks and some general questions, the Student Version contains writing assignments concerning selections similar to those to be discussed in class. The purpose of these is to encourage students to use the concepts they have learned in class to evaluate other literature without the aid of discussion. Some of these could also be used for group discussions or for further class discussions.

Unfortunately, since many of the works included are in books rather than mimeographed, students will know the names of the authors, which in many cases are suggestive of evaluation in themselves. You may wish to ditto without author the shorter works which are old enough to be out of copyright. In any case, it should be emphasized that every poet has written bad work; some have also turned out good work.

Sometimes in storied forms it is the plot itself which is trite. The most overused situations are the clear-cut stories of movies, television, and cheap novels--the young lovers overcome the cruel parents or cruel society, the good guys shoot the bad guys, the handsome young doctor triumphs over the greedy old quack. These are of course the basic situations of comedy. But surely much good comedy has been written around these situations; surely much good literature makes use of such elements.

We might again look at Shakespeare to illustrate originality in using such traditions. Most of his comic plots are in outline completely conventional; indeed some are stories used many times before. _As You Like It_ was far from new in plot; yet Shakespeare added complication through minor characters who echo and comment on the actions of their betters, moved the whole to a pastoral setting, telescoped the time-span involved, and focused more sharply on problems of the relationship of brother to brother. And of course, as in all Shakespeare, the old story becomes a vehicle for a facility with language and a wit which alone would mark the work as individual. Closely related is the kind of individuality we find in Keats' "Eve of St. Agnes," an entirely typical and very simple plot made worthwhile by the richness of the leisurely descriptive language in which it is narrated. _The Glass Menagerie_ uses some of these comic conventions to communicate Williams' personal ideas about their applicability to modern society. The conventional structure is of course reversed and complicated; to some degree it is also satirized, particularly through the mother, who apparently lived according to the pattern in her youth, but who found the results to be tragedy rather than happiness ever after.

Conventional plot may, then, be tritely retold or it may be reworked, complicated, _used_ to communicate the new. In both storied and non-storied forms it may also be the basic ideas, the thematic materials, which appear trite. We could scarcely assert that one theme is trite, another original, for as with the comic situation, the over-used idea may be presented with freshness and originality. But in the trite poem this idea is often developed only through stock responses to emotionally connotative words--"baby," "youth," "mother." Frequently a few words serve to bring out the response; the rest may well be pure verbiage, verbiage which is often smothered in rhetorical flights which please the ear but make little impression on the mind.

When the idea is overworked and surrounded by mere padding, the author frequently attempts to bring out more emotion than the idea normally causes. The result is sentimentality: the attempt to elicit from a theme or situation more emotion than is warranted. This is the stock in trade of the writer of newspaper "human interest" stories, of the propagandizer of the plight of the poor, of the elegist whose praises exaggerate the merits of the dead.

It should be clear by now that the characteristic called "triteness" is nearly inseparable from oversimplification and from sentimentality. Students should be encouraged to note that it is the treatment of a theme or plot more than the theme or plot itself which leads to triteness. A work which develops an idea with complexity and which draws from the idea the true degree of emotion which it deserves need not be called "trite" simply because the idea is old. In his "essay on Criticism," Alexander Pope speaks of true wit not as that which is totally original but as "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed."

Suggested Further Reading

Altick, Richard D. "Sentimentality" in Preface to Critical Reading, 4th ed., New York, 1960, pp. 291-294.

Perrine, Laurence. "Bad Poetry and Good" in Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry, New York, 1963, pp. 214-230.

Wellek, Rene, and Austin Warren, "Literary Genres" in Theory of Literature, 3rd ed., New York, 1956, pp. 226-237. (This chapter is primarily by Warren.)

I. Lyric Poetry

Lyric poetry is trite when it deals with an old idea in the same old way. As suggested in the introduction, the "same old way" usually leads to three weaknesses: (a) There is a tendency toward too-familiar words and groups of words, often used before to express the same or similar ideas. The result is trite language and "stock phrases," the worst effect of a concept of poetic diction, of the idea that for some reason poetry must be written in a language more decorative and elevated than that of prose or speech. (b) Since a familiar idea can usually be stated in a few words, the rest of the poem is frequently filled with mere padding, in the form of repetition or of comparisons which do little to forward the meaning or clarity of the main idea. (c) An overly familiar idea loses its attraction for the reader, so the author may attempt to sentimentalize it, to attach to it more emotional significance than it deserves. He often does this through using words which elicit a "stock response": baby, mother, flag, love.

Of course, all three weaknesses may be and frequently are present in one poem., For the sake of convenience, we have selected poems to discuss under each of the three headings, but it should be understood that in most cases the trite poems contain all three errors.

Although it should be clear after the unit on difficulty--"Difficult Literture: A Reader's View"--students may need to be reminded that they cannot evaluate a poem before they understand it. The trite poems will frequently be easier to read because the ideas are familiar; the reader has every right to "like" a work better because it is easier, but he cannot fairly say that it is better or worse than a more difficult poem until he understands them both.

A. Trite Language.

Selections:

Wilfred Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth," Immortal Poems, (ed. Oscar Williams, Washington Square Press, New York, 1965), p. 553

Robinson Jeffers, "The Bloody Sire," Immortal Poems, p. 531

Edgar Guest, "Along the Paths of Glory,"

(For text, see The Path to Home by Edgar A. Guest, The Reilly & Lee Co., Chicago, 1919, p. 61.)

Recognizing the stock phrasing of trite language will be especially difficult for students without a broad background in poetry, but the examples here are extreme enough so that all should be able to see the differences after a little careful prompting and questioning. All three poems present an evaluation of war. Guest writing in the old tradition of the glories of war fought for freedom; Owen giving the less outdated but still familiar idea that war leads to horror, not glory; Jeffers propounding a fresher concept that violence, although horrible, has brought about much of the good in the world. Does this mean that Guest and Owen are both trite, Jeffers original? Not necessarily, for as we have said, it is not so much the idea itself as the method of presentation which determines originality. Jeffers is undeniably original. Guest is undeniably trite, using an ordinary situation and stock language to present an old message. Owen's message is old, yet his language is fresh and the comparison of the sounds and sights of war to those of a funeral is new.

After an explanation of what is meant by "stock phrases" and of how the poet comes to use them, students might be asked to try to identify such overused word-groups in the three poems. Probably nothing in Owen deserves to be so identified. Jeffers does fall into a few somewhat overworked phrases--"high time," "fleet limbs." But Guest's poem is full of phrases far more familiar--"paths o' glory," "youthful hearts," "loved ones," "gentle mothers," "flags o'freedom," "eternal youth," many others. And it makes wide use of words which bring about a predictable emotion without requiring the reader to think, words which lead to a "stock response," such as "mother," "youth," "freedom," "truth." The latter two are vague words, used not so much to really state a meaning as to elicit a predicted response.

So much has been written in recent years on the horrors of war that Owen's basic theme has little more freshness than Guest's. Yet we might note that, instead of the overworked word combinations of Guest, Owen uses combinations of words not normally used together, making the reader pause and think about their meaning instead of just responding with automatic emotion and going on--phrases such as "monstrous anger," "stuttering rifle," "shrill, demented choirs," "sad shires," "slow dusk."

Owen is original not only in isolated phrases but also in the total scheme of presenting the familiar message through an extended metaphor comparing the battle scene to a funeral. Here the author shows his consciousness of tradition when he inverts it--the boys die not as heroes but as cattle; they are not brought ceremoniously home but are left to have their funerals on the battle fields. So gunfire provides the death knell and prayer, wailing shells replace a choir of mourners, the tears of their friends are the candles and the patient minds of the suffering their flowers.

Jeffers is reversing this newer tradition that war is vicious, evil, without glory but he does not go back to the old, trite ideas of Guest. He presents a paradoxical double message, suggesting the horrors of violence while stating the benefits it brings when it causes the evolution of the legs of the antelope, the wings of the bird, and the eyes of the goshawk, when it makes the story of Helen's beauty memorable or martyrs Christ. The suggestion of horror comes through his choice of diction, when he says not merely "let the guns shoot and the bombs fall," but "let the guns bark and the bombing-plane/Speak his prodigious blasphemies," when he chooses to speak of the finely-chiseled wolf's tooth, of the "terrible help of spears," of "cruel and bloody victories."

Guest presented the old message in the old way, filling out the form of his poem with stock phrases and sentimental wording instead of with original ideas. Owen is original not so much because he reverses the message as because he sees and makes full use of both the similarities and the differences of battlefield and funeral. Both he and Jeffers play with their language, using the unusual and thought-provoking word combination rather than the conventional and stock-response producing phrase.

B. Over-Wording.

Selections:

Stanzas from Wordsworth's "The Thorn" and "A Sailor's Mother"

John Milton, "On His Blindness," Immortal Poems, p. 106

Edgar Guest, "A Plea"

(For text, see Path to Home, ibid., p. 17)

Conventional presentation of a conventional message can usually, as we have noted, be stated in few words. The form of the poem is frequently filled out with stock phrases and words producing a predictable emotional reaction for which thought is unnecessary. Or the poet may find the extra words needed by bringing in inconsequential details or by repetition, frequently disguised in rhetorical flourish.

Wordsworth's attentiveness to the life of the common man made him particularly liable to turn to details too unimportant to be brought into his poetry. Comparing the original and revised versions of his works at times shows him attempting to remedy this problem. For example, in the following stanza from the original version of "The Thorn," the last four lines say only that her suffering was like a fire burning within her; the idea of it drying her body and brain is ridiculous hyperbole which adds nothing to the poem:

> And they had fixed the wedding day,
> The morning that must wed them both;
> But Stephen to another Maid
> Had sworn another oath;
> And with this other Maid, to church
> Unthinking Stephen went--
> Poor Martha! on that woeful day
> A cruel, cruel fire, they say,
> Into her bones was sent:
> It dried her body like a cinder,
> And almost turned her brain to tinder.

These lines could not be cut entirely, since the stanza form was set by the rest of the poem. But they could be changed to say more about the depths of Martha's feeling. In the following revision, Wordsworth adds that the feeling was one of "pitiless dismay," that it was located in her soul, that it was endless:

> "And they had fixed the wedding day,
> The morning that must wed them both;
> But Stephen to another Maid
> Had sworn another oath;
> And, with this other Maid, to church
> Unthinking Stephen went--
> Poor Martha! on that woeful day
> A pang of pitiless dismay

Into her soul was sent;
A fire was kindled in her breast,
Which might not burn itself to rest.

In the following stanza from the original version of "The Sailor's Mother," Wordsworth has included the detail about Hull, unimportant to any reader and of absolutely no interest to one not familiar with local geography, and has practically repeated himself in saying "clothes... or other property":

And thus continuing, she said
"I had a son, who many a day
Sailed on the sea; but he is dead
In Denmark he was cast away;
And I have travelled far as Hull to see
What clothes he might have left, or other property."

In the revision, he remedies the awkward repetition while including the additional concepts that she travels "weary miles" and that property may "still remain for me," suggesting that these would be not merely old clothes but important sentimental monuments. Again the individual significance of the message is increased:

And, thus continuing, she said,
"I had a Son, who many a day
Sailed on the seas, but he is dead;
In Denmark he was cast away:
And I have travelled weary miles to see
If aught which he had owned might still remain for me.

Repetition is a more obvious prop in Guest's "A Plea," in which Guest repeats several times the old idea that he wishes to patiently do the duty assigned to him on earth. The whole message of the poem is stated in the first two lines and again in the last two lines, with somewhat expanded versions in the first four lines of the second stanza and in the first four of the third stanza. Each of these statements is nearly a repetition of the other two. Such phrases as "'neath the sky" do nothing more than fill out a line without changing the meaning. Some words serve only a rhetorical purpose: what does the author mean by "unspoke"? What does this word add to the total idea of the poem?

Thinking of the blindness which he fears may prevent him from further writing, Milton's thoughts naturally center around the same time-honored concept of fulfilling one's duty. But this personal application alone gives some individuality to the poem. Further originality is achieved through the dramatic concept of the dialogue with Patience, through the use of bibical allusion, and through the modification of the basic idea to assert that those who patiently wait also serve. Students will probably understand this sonnet better if they are told a little about Milton's blindness and are made familiar with the story of the servant who hid his talent, or coin, Matthew XXV. 14-30.

Like Wordsworth's final versions, then, Milton's poem uses its words economically, making each phrase add to the individual significance of the situation instead of merely repeating the same overworked general idea, as Guest does.

C. Sentimentality.

Selections:

John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," Immortal Poems, p. 321.

James Whitcomb Riley, "Longfellow, 1807-1907"

(For text, see The Complete Poetical Works of James Whitcomb Riley, Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1941, pp. 729-730.)

Matthew Arnold, "Shakespeare"

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask--Thou smilest and art still,

Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.--Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

"Sentimentality" as we are using it here means assigning to an idea or situation more emotion than it warrants. Of course the poet almost invariably deals in language designed to affect the reader's emotions, to make him aware of the poet's feelings about his subject. But when the subject is an old one treated in the old manner, the poet may be tempted to try to draw new and greater feeling from it, to go beyond the amount of feeling naturally found in the situation.

We might observe Riley's poem on the death of Longfellow, who wrote some worthwhile verse but who certainly did not change mankind from wrong to right. Here Riley attempts unsuccessfully to make cosmic and universal an event which could, on a simpler level, have been presented with an original and honest degree of praise. Striving for a grand effect, he makes use of stock phrases which perhaps were grand when first used but which now have been heard too often to elicit any real thought--the "heaven-struck harp of harmony," "melodious magic," "changeless right."

Certainly it is difficult to eulogize a favorite writer without any exaggeration. In his sonnet on Shakespeare, Arnold does make some suggestions that the poet had supernatural powers, but the suggestions are far milder and are certainly more deserved by Shakespeare than by Longfellow. To many Shakespeare does seem to have some special knowledge of humanity, some insight into the great unanswerable questions. The second quatrain might be labeled sentimental, although it is clear that Arnold is speaking figuratively of Shakespeare's special powers. An accusation of using words merely for the sake of rhetoric in the tenth line would probably be just.

Both Riley and Arnold make the mistake of claiming that the poets they are eulogizing have the same grand effect on all men that they themselves derive from reading them. In "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," on the other hand, Keats is expressing only how the experience of reading George Chapman's translation of Homer affects himself. He is not making the dishonest claim that such reading is to every man what discovering the Pacific or a new planet would be. (Note: Keats has confused Cortez and Balboa here.) He is assuming that all men would find such discoveries exciting and is therefore quite honestly using the comparison to express his own great intellectual excitement upon reading the "pure serene" of all that which bards "hold in fealty," or express as the mouthpieces of, Apollo, god of poetry as well as of the sun. Keats is expressing an intensely individual experience; he is expressing it in an individual manner; although that manner may to some seem extreme, the feeling attached to the experience is not dishonest, not mere sentiment.

By this point in the unit, students should have developed some basic standards which may be used to judge the originality of all literature, storied and non-storied. The remainder of the unit concentrates more specifically on the problems of storied forms.

II. Short Stories

Selections:

"Jim Bent, Deserter": anonymous, in Kempton, Short Stories for Study.

John Steinbeck, "Flight," Short Story Masterpieces, pp. 454-474.

You will probably find that movies, television, and popular fiction have made students more able to identify triteness in storied forms than in non-storied ones. Consequently, this part of the unit should lend itself even more than the poetry section to induction. It might be particularly beneficial here to have students list the virtues and faults to each story or to write a paragraph on the originality of each before any discussion takes place, thus forcing them to form individual opinions. A class of poor readers may see the errors in "Jim Bent" more clearly if it is read aloud, but of course this should be done only if you or a good student can read it without overemphasizing the faults.

Presenting an overly-familiar idea in the usual manner can have the same three effects in a storied form as in a non-storied one. Sentimentality is of coursera danger; the overworked plot-theme combination is frequently made to seem uninteresting through giving it undue emotional significance. Or it may be filled in and extended with trite wording, stock phrasing, and simple padding. In addition, the storied form may have a trite plot, one which follows the old formulas without adding the complications of situation and of values characteristic of real situations. In this area, of course, any discussion of originality overlaps discussion of moral complexity.

"Jim Bent" makes use of the familiar concepts that the good win and the evil are punished, that adultery and murder are wrong, that true love will conquer its obstacles. It obeys these conventions without regard for whether they are likely to come about in the situation; the author seems to be forcing the fictional world he portrays to fit the conventions instead of investigating the complexities of life.

The insistence on fitting the situation to the conventions results in a trite plot, in which typical characters move in the usual manner toward the usual ending, aided by improbable and coincidental events where the situation cannot more naturally be made to come out right. The girl with whom Bent falls in love is the typical sweet innocent; no complexity of characterization hints that she has any of the stronger personality elements necessary to draw her into a bar, into detective work, or into passionate and reckless love for Bent. And what is Bent doing in the bar if he doesn't drink? Why would a tee-totalling detective searching for a non-drinker run into him in a "cheap saloon"? Wouldn't both be more apt to sit in a park if they "had nowhere else to go"? And of course, little need be said about the improbability of Kane being shot twice in one evening, even if each man does have some reason to shoot him, or of Lane running in to confess just as Bent is facing the colonel. The conventions say the lovers must be saved, so the plot is given this unnatural twist to save them. Convention says they must fall in love, so love they do, although we are not told enough about them to know why they should attract each other.

In Steinbeck's plot, on the other hand, each step is the natural and usually inevitable outgrowth of previous steps. Nothing in "Jim Bent" has prepared us for thinking either Bent or Lane capable of shooting a man. But we see in Pepé signs of weakness and of a desire to be viewed as a man which could lead him to killing anyone who taunted him; we see his skill with the knife which becomes the tool of the killing. In "Jim Bent," the ending is unreasonable as the outcome of prior events. But Pepé's death seems fairly certain as he tells his mother of the killing; the foreshadowing of circling buzzards, his approach to the dark ridge of the mountains, and Rosy's saying, "He is not dead . . . . Not yet" make it inevitable. These observations suggest not only that "Flight" is by far the more original story, but also that, like much good literature, it uses convention as a tool. Like Hardy in The Mayor of Casterbridge, read in the eleventh grade, Steinbeck has used devices from dramatic tragedy in prose fiction.

Partly because the plot follows rules of cause and effect rather than the conventional ones of "poetic justice," the thematic values of Steinbeck's story are must more complicated. Mrs. Lane is distinctly wrong in hiding her husband as a killer. But the class will probably find it difficult to decide whether Mama Torres, an ignorant woman whose great virtue and great purpose in life is to protect her children, is right or wrong in sending Pepé off to the mountains. Pepé is to some degree wrong in killing the man, yet we see little bad in him since, like Macbeth and Oedipus, he seems to have almost no choice about committing his crime. Our sympathies become more thoroughly involved with him because we do not see the murder itself but we do see his suffering afterwards. And we see him become a strong man rather than a weak child because he has committed the crime. Is it right that he, who almost unintentionally does wrong, be taken away just when he could become useful to his innocent, suffering family? His death is a release to him--he stands up to take it quickly, as a man--but to the family it is a cause of further suffering.

Such complex values are the natural accompaniment of complex, individual character. The characters of "Jim Bent" are flat, type-cast, unnaturally one-sided: Bent is all self-sacrificing nobility, "the girl" all shy sweetness, Mrs. Lane all wily trickery. Steinbeck's minor characters are equally undeveloped; even Mama Torres is fairly simple in her unthinking and total devotion to her children. But this is a story about Pepé, and Pepé is both complex and human. He is at first weak and childlike, but he has the potentiality to become a man in his pride and his wish to accept responsibility for his family. His reaction to killing a man is not the unnaturally noble wish of Bent and Lane to pay for their crimes but the more probable response of fearful flight.

Steinbeck's story is individualised in its description not only of characters but also of setting. The closest the author of "Jim Bent" comes to such description is saying that Bent meets the girl in a "cheap saloon." But Steinbeck's whole first paragraph sets a scene of lonely desolation, reflected in the lives of the people who live there. At times, particularly toward the end, the details have symbolic importance: it is at the bottom of a canyon that Pepé hears a dog and loses all hope; it is on the ridge peak that he takes the final manly step of standing up to be shot. And as Pepé comes closer to death, his surroundings, at first lush and green, become dusty and dry. After the fat man passes him, the trees are smaller and their tops are dead (464).

Steinbeck is much more original than the author of "Jim Bent" not only in these larger aspects of plot, theme, characterization, and setting, but also in fine points of diction and phraseology. Students should have little trouble picking out stock phrases in "Jim Bent," which include such remarks as "come to a head," "lady in question," "left the rest to the flushed bartender's imagination," and "his feelings came to the surface." It may take a little more prompting to help them to see the descriptive power of Steinbeck's language. But they may recognise the metaphoric quality of many phrases, such as "the white surf creamed on the reef" (455), "the moonlight was being thinned by the dawn" (461), "the fivefingered ferns . . . dripped spray from their fingertips" (463), and "the withered moon" (472).

These examples are of course extreme. "Jim Bent" is the work of an untalented, non-professional writer; "Flight" is by one of the most noted authors of our century. Neither is the medium quality sort of material students most need to learn to judge. But hopefully a careful discussion of these two stories will enable them to evaluate works which lie somewhere between these two poles.

Discussion Questions

(There seems to be no reason to design questions around each story, since they are perfectly comprehensible examples of good and bad writing, included primarily for comparison. So only comparative questions are included here.)

1. Different men will of course react differently to the idea of having killed another. Pepé kills a man; Bent thinks he does. According to the information the author has previously given you about him, which man acts most fully in accord with his character?--All that we know about Bent is that he wishes to save his friend, which might give some hint of the nobility to come, but which tells us little about the strength of character we meet in him. On the other hand, we know a great deal about the combination of weak laziness and desire to appear manly which would cause Pepé to flee but to stand up bravely to die at the end of the flight.

2. Both stories are in some respects about a self-sacrificing love, although the love is of very different kinds. Bent and "the girl" are each ready to give up a great deal for each other; Mama Torres, we come to feel, has devoted the whole of her life to her children. Compare the motivation of the love in each case; ask yourself if the authors give you better reasons for the love of Bent and the girl for each other or of Mama for her children.--About "the girl," we are told only that she looks sad and refined; about Bent, that he is noble and chivalrous. Is this enough to lead her to be ready to hide a murderer; to lead him to give himself up for prosecution? Steinbeck tells us little about the Torres family's earlier life, but we know how hard Mama has worked for these children--and how putting so much devotion into merely keeping them alive must have multiplied her natural mother love. And we see the qualities in Pepé which might cause a mother to love him, we see the pride she has developed in him.

3. Compare the probability of each story ending as it does.--See pp. 14-15 above.

4. The first paragraph in each case sets some sort of background for the story. Which tells you more about the type of story? Which more accurately foreshadows the kind of development and ending to be expected? Would you say that the action, what happens, is always the most important part of a story?--The "Bent" introduction gives the factual background, much of which is sufficiently indicated in the rest of the story so that it could have been excluded, leading to an active, interesting opening in medias res. Steinbeck's opening sets the scene, determining the atmosphere of the whole story and communicating through suggestion the lonely isolation from society which makes these people what they are.

5. Each story has some indication of right and wrong. Does it seem right or wrong that Mrs. Lane attempts to hide her husband's guilt? That Mama attempts to hide Pepé from detection? In which story is the moral situation more complex? Which sort of situation seems to you to come closer to life?--Mrs. Lane is a monstrous being, always in the wrong. Since we know more about how Mama thinks and feels, we are more able to see why she hides Pepé and to forgive her for what in an absolute sense is wrong.

III. Narrative Poetry.

Selection:

John Keats, "The Eve of St. Agnes," Immortal Poems, p. 333. Stanzas will be referred to here by numbers in parentheses. Since neither stanzas nor lines are numbered in Immortal Poems, it might be advisable to have responsible students carefully number the stanzas the first time the books are used.

We will find ourselves looking at narrative poetry in much the same way as we have examined short stories. For here too triteness can involve the three areas discussed under lyric poetry, as well as problems of plot and characterization. But what we will find is that often, although not always, narrative poetry does use traditional ideas presented through typical plotting and characterization. The individuality tends to come through carefully developed description, through well-chosen figurative language, through the poetics of the work.

Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes" is built around a plot as simple and cliché-filled as that of "Jim Bent." It is the old, Romeo-and-Juliet style of story, of the coming together of lovers from feuding families; as usual, they are sympathetic figures but their actions are wrong according to the thematic values of the work, so the world around them is disturbed.

Here the effect of Madeline's elopement is stormy weather, the horrible dreams of the castle inmates, and the death of old Angela, who had helped them, and of the beadsman.

The characters, too, are flat, simple, and ordinary. The two old people are aged, weak, and devoted, Angela being the typical old loving servant of Romeo and Juliet. Madeline is type-cast as the sweet and beautiful maiden devoted to her love. Although we learn a little more of Porphyro's character, what we find is that he is the typical chivalrous knight, strong in every way except when faced with the fair damsel he loves.

The exact details of the story are less important than the richly descriptive way in which it is presented. The verse form used makes this sort of description possible. It is the Spenserian stanza, consisting of eight lines of iambic pentameter, followed by an Alexandrine, or iambic line of twelve syllables. A little longer than the ottava rima stanza Keats used in much of his narrative poetry, this stanza allows for more expansion of detail. The longer last line causes each stanza to be a well-defined unit. The form also helps to create the medieval atmosphere of the poem by reminding the reader of Spenser's Fairie Queene, in which it is used throughout.

The sort of vivid description which is Keats' forte is largely the result of the concrete detail of his imagery. This becomes clearer when his descriptions are compared with similar pictorial attempts by other poets. We might, for example, compare the opening stanza of Wordsworth's "She Was a Phantom of Delight" (Immortal Poems, p. 249) with Keats' first full stanza of description of Madeline. We hear exactly the type of music which forms the background to Madeline's musings; we know in detail how the ignored suitors came to her; we know her look of absence without disdain. Wordsworth's picture, on the other hand, is formed primarily of figures of speech, so that we know that the woman he describes is similar to an apparition, a moment's ornament, to twilight and May and dawn, but we know little about the exact nouns and adjectives which could describe her. She is described in the abstract, so that we know something of the atmosphere or feeling which surrounds her; Madeline is described in the concrete, so that we know the physical details of herself and her surroundings. This does not, of course, necessarily mean that Keats is a better poet, but only that his intentions were different, were more pictorial than philosophical.

The vividness of the description is often emphasized through contrast. The feeble age of the beadsman and Angela makes an effective foil for the active, impassioned youth of Madeline and Porphyro. The coldness of the out of doors and of other parts of the castle serve to bring out the luxurious warmth of Madeline's chamber; the noise of the distant party and of the storm, emphasize its quietness.

Most of the descriptive details are of course aimed at the sense of sight. But Keats does work with the other senses, particularly hearing, to an unusual degree. A specialty of Keats is the device known as synesthesia, the description of one sensory experience in terms of another. A good example from another poet is Emily Dickinson's "blue, uncertain stumbling buzz" of a fly. The effect is to intensify the impact on one sense through its combination with another, much as its looking or smelling pleasant can increase the pleasure one takes from tasting good food. Thus when Keats speaks of the "bitter chill," (1) we can feel the sting of the cold better for "tasting" it. When he tells us of Madeline's "balmy side" (23), we can better understand the look of its softness through the association with the feel of something soft and soothing. Students will probably enjoy searching for other examples, and such a search will force them into attentiveness to the sense impressions used.

The sense of action or energy which accompanies this concrete description results partially from the use of adjectives formed from verbs. We have, for example, the "tiptoe" cavaliers approaching Madeline. Present participles at times perform this function, as in the "besieging wind" (40) or the "shuffling" old Angela. But more apparent is the use of past participles: "warmed jewels" (26), "honey'd middle of the night" (6), "wreathed pearls" (26), "poppied warmth" (27). Most noticeable here is the way frequent past participles are used to incorporate a sense of the action of human agents into the inanimate description of the casement in Madeline's room (24).

A device which also at times serves to further the sense of action is personification, especially through verbal forms. The "besieging wind" (40), mentioned above, for example, suggests deliberate and violent action on the part of the wind. The trumpets "chide" (4), Madeline's attire "creeps" down (26), the scutcheon on the window "blush'd" (24), the door "groans" upon its hinges (41). Personification provides concentrated description, although without a sense of action, in the famous line, "Madeline asleep in lap of legends old" (15).

The simile, too, is used to create compact and meaningful description. Keats' best similes add to our understanding of more than just the object compared. For example, in the fifth stanza he describes the party guests as

> Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
> The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
> Of old romance.

The simile, of course, suggests that many happy and colorful guests flit here and there in the hall. But it also foreshadows the kind of mind we will find in Madeline, well stuffed with the shadows of old romance. Similarly, the description of Porphyro as "like a throbbing star/Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose" (36) tells us not only of the intensity of his passion but also of the quiet peace of his surroundings.

Other suggestions of a religious atmosphere are frequently present. Most obvious is the opening scene in the chapel of the beadsman, who comes in again at the end. And we are often reminded that this is a holy day. Several images are taken from religious terminology: the "carved angels" of the hall (4), the comparisons of Madeline to "a missioned spirit" (22), to a "splendid angel" (25), Porphyro's picture of himself as "a famished pilgrim" at a "silver shrine" (38).

Although every event in the poem is possible, a suggestion of the supernatural accompanies the religious atmosphere. This is, of course, strongest in the final stanza, where those around the pair are evidently punished for their unnatural love. But we also have the actual dream of Madeline, besides the unreal, overcolored and storybookish feeling of the entire poem.

Blended with the air of the religious and the supernatural is the strong suggestion of medievalism, intensified, as mentioned earlier, by the use of the Spenserian stanza. The descriptions of the castle, the family feud, and the use of heraldic terms in the description of the casement further the air of antiquity.

We have discussed various aspects of the poem which make it unusual, which give it individualism despite the triteness of plot, theme, and characterization. But certainly it will be necessary to discuss the events of the plot itself in more detail in class. And you may find it preferable with a slower class to go through the poem stanza by stanza instead of arranging your discussion around the various aspects of the language and poetics, as is done here.

Since the book you will be using has no notes for this poem which contains several archaic terms and references which might be confusing to students, the notes below are included in the Student Version. With them, a group of fairly adept readers should be able to read the poem silently before discussing it. You may wish to tell students that most versions, even in college texts, contain such notes, and that therefore certainly there is nothing reprehensible about using them. Notes are identified by the stanza number, followed by a dash and the line number within the stanza.

1-1 St. Agnes' Eve" St. Agnes was martyred as a very young girl after refusing to give up either her Christianity or her chastity. She became the patron saint of virgins; the lamb, mentioned in stanza eight, became the symbol of her innocence. A legend developed that on the eve of her feast day, January 21, maidens who performed certain rituals, such as going to bed without supper and not looking behind them as they prepared for bed, would dream of the men they were to marry.

1-5 beadsman: a man who prays for another, especially as a duty

1-7 censer: a container in which incense is burned

2-6 black, purgatorial rails: "rails" probably means the sculptured rabes on the statues of the dead. These are "purgatorial" because the dead are held in purgatory.

2-7 dumb oratories: an oratory is a small chapel for prayer; this one is "dumb" because it is occupied by the sculptured figures of the dead.

5-1 argent: silver, shining

8-7 amort: like death

8-8 lambs unshorn: when lambs were brought to the altar as a sacrifice on St. Agnes' day, the wool was given to the nuns to be spun and woven.

10-3 citadel: fortress, stronghold

10-9 beldame: an old woman

12-6 gossip: godmother or elderly female friend; not a term of disrespect

14-3 witch's sieve: a sieve which witchcraft has made able to hold water

14-4 fays: fairies

17-9 beard: to oppose, defy

19-9 Since Merlin paid his demon: a reference to the end of Merlin, in which he is shut up in a tree.

20-2 cates: choice foods

20-3 tambour frame: drum-shaped embroidery frame

21-8 amain: exceedingly

21-9 ague: a fit of shaking, a chill

22-9 frayed: frightened

24-7 heraldries: coats of arms

24-9 scutcheon: a shield-shaped surface on which a coat of arms is shown

25-2 gules: the color red as used in heraldry

25-3 boon: favor

27-7 like a missal where swart Paynims pray: clasped shut, as a missal, or prayer book, would be in a country of Paynims, or pagans

29-5 Morphean amulet: a charm belonging to Morpheus, the god of sleep

29-8 affray: frighten

30-5 soother: smoother, softer, more soothing

30-7 argosy: a large merchant ship or a fleet of such ships
30-8 Fez: a city in northern Morocco
30-9 Samarcand: a city in Asia, just north of Afghanistan
31-6 seraph: a member of the highest order of angels
31-7 eremite: hermit
32-5 salver: tray
33-4 In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans mercy": in Provence a district in southern France, called "The beautiful lady without pity."
37-1 flaw-blown: a flaw is a sudden gust of wind
38-3 vermeil: vermilion, a brilliant scarlet red
40-7 arras: tapestry

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Keats included the first four and a half stanzas?--These present two scenes, each of which provides background for and contrast with the main events. From them, we learn in what sort of place and amid what sort of people Madeline lives. The first scene of cold and death contrasts with the warmth and life of the lovers; the religious quality, with their nearly pagan natures. The noisy crowd of the second scene contrasts with their quiet solitude.

2. What do stanzas 6-8 and 22 tell about Madeline's character? Describe Porphyro's character after studying stanzas 9-19. Are they such that it seems likely that they would fall in love with one another? What does Porphyro intend to do in Madeline's chamber? When you have finished the poem, decide whether you think he has carried out these intentions.

3. Stanzas 24-26 are purely physical description. When you thoroughly understand the picture they present, reread them to decide what they suggest about Madeline's nature and about the atmosphere of the room.

4. What senses is Keats working on in stanzas 30-31?

5. What is the cause of all the horrors of the last line?--A deed not in harmony with an orderly life has upset the exterior universe, as the plan to kill Shakespeare's Caesar causes a lioness to whelp in the street, graves to yawn, etc. (Julius Caesar, II. ii. 12-26). The love is not according to the rules or orderly living because the two run away unmarried. Angela, who has helped them, suffers most.

IV. Drama.

Selection:

Tennessee Williams, The Glass Menagerie, in Six Great Modern Plays, Laurel edition, New York, 1956.

With the exception of a few very regularized forms of lyric poetry, such as the sonnet, probably no type of literature is as highly conventionalized as drama. This is partially due to the limitations staging puts on the form: it cannot break away from consisting entirely of dialogue between speakers in a specific setting. It cannot say specifically what a character is thinking. It cannot say specifically what the author thinks about what is going on. In addition, it has always been limited by being an old form, one for which the Greeks set up rigid conventions, from some of which few playwrights have ever had the courage and the inventiveness to stray. The novel and the short story are relatively new forms which are still being formed, formalized, regularized. Only in our own century have people like Henry James begun to suggest rules for prose fiction writing. But Aristotle suggested rules for drama well over two thousand years ago.

By this time, students who have been in the program in past years should be familiar with these conventions. However, some review of what all dramas usually have in common might be helpful at this point.

The Glass Menagerie is an ideal study at this time for two reasons. Acutely conscious of the conventions of drama, of its advantages and disadvantages, Williams economically makes use of the conventions which fit his purpose and inventively changes those which interfere, picking up ideas from prose fiction and from movies which are normally not incorporated in staged drama. And secondly, he plays off the lives and the speech of his characters against the conventions of plot and language. He constantly keeps the patterns that lives are "supposed" to follow in the minds of both characters and audience while showing them how different the lives of his characters are. Williams does not simply discard all convention in the manner of some rabid experimentalists; when it is convenient he uses the convention, often twisting and turning it until it says what he wishes.

Perhaps the use of the conventions of language will be most obvious to students. Trite phraseology is part of Amanda's characterization, comparable to her expectation that her children's lives will follow the trite patterns. She tells Tom to "rise and shine" (457) every morning; she says to Laura that "sticks and stones can break our bones, but the expression on Mr. Garfinkel's face won't harm us" (458), to Jim that "man proposes--and woman accepts the proposal" (484).

Although he uses fewer trite phrases, Jim's language also falls into established patterns. He makes small talk about the usual things--how Laura is feeling, what she has done since high school. His discussion of inferiority complexes sounds as if it comes straight from an amateur psychologist's manual, (496-7); the following encouragement to Laura has the ring of a conventional high school graduation speech.

Tom and Laura, in contrast to Amanda and Jim, avoid the overworked in their speech patterns; they realize that they are not following and indeed cannot follow the conventional patterns in their lives, and their speech reflects this realization. Laura's language shows that she is off in a world of her own; she cannot make small talk according to the established rules, she cannot speak of real things like business school and men and even the weather; she has something to say only about her glass menagerie and her phonograph and the high school life of Jim, which is as disconnected from her own existence as is the life of a unicorn.

Tom's originality is of an entirely different sort. He is aware both of the patterned world, of the world in which Jim lives and to which Amanda wants to return, and of the dream world of Laura and of poetry. So he picks up the trite phrases of the patterned, conventional world and twists them, turns them into a language all his own, a language which shows how tragically his talents are being wasted. When angry, he becomes melodramatic but original, telling his mother, "You think I want to spend fifty-five *years* down there in that--*celotex interior*! with--*fluorescent--tubes*!" (453). Coming in drunk at five in the morning, he can work out for Laura the metaphor of the man getting himself out of the coffin (457); at the end he tells the audience how the cities he roamed through "swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches" (508)--away from the root of his being, which is his love for Laura.

But the play between convention and originality, so apparent in the language, is more fundamentally present in the plot and characterization. Amanda's youth sets a pattern of expectation of what the conventional girl is like. It is much like the conventional plot pattern of "The Eve of St. Agnes": pretty young girl is courted by able, ambitious young men and finally goes off with one of these, with whom she is madly in love, to live happily ever after. Amanda consistently refers back to this time and has it always in mind that Laura's life will follow the same pattern; the other characters and the audience are kept conscious of the pattern but realize that it is rarely fulfilled in the world of the play.

The life of Amanda herself is set against the pattern: she goes off with the man she loves but finds a tragic reversal in his running off and her definitely not living happily ever after. Laura's life too is set against this standard comic plot: in the conventional play she would of course marry

Jim; his kiss would be the beginning of a new life. But here we know that certain tragic flaws within Laura make something so realistic as marriage impossible; that the kiss will be only the beginning of new tortures which will send her further into her dream world.

The conventional plot pattern sets up expectations not only for the lives of the women but also for those of the men. As Tom says, "Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter" (462); he is supposed to be ambitious, confident, and ready to do all he can to provide a good life for the woman he loves. Jim sets the pattern, which we also see as it exists in Amanda's mind. But Tom goes on to say, "None of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse." Nor are they given much play in the home he compares to a nailed-up coffin; Tom knows that he cannot possibly live up to the pattern by being ambitious for those he loves because to be with them is to be stifled and bound to a warehouse job which leaves him without the energy for ambitious endeavors. He knows that he can satisfy his ambitions only by escape; yet he finds that his sensitivity, the very thing which might lead him to success in the literary world, will not ever allow him to really escape--even if he goes not to the moon but much further.

This is the tragedy of Laura and of Amanda, but even more, it is the tragedy of Tom; it is the story of the attempt and failure of a talented young man to free himself to use his talents. It is the story of the development of a human mind and of the limitations placed upon that development. Such a subject has traditionally been easier to present effectively in prose fiction than in drama because in the novel or short story the author can directly tell what the protagonist is thinking and feeling, can describe the mood and atmosphere around him, can even step in and analyze the effect of a particular event on him. Yet drama is Williams' form, and drama has the advantage of visualization.

So Williams' problem was to change the conventions of dramatic form sufficiently so that it had the advantages of prose fiction for such a story while retaining its own strong points. The most significant device used in this direction is having Tom act as narrator as well as character. This makes commentary on events and their effects on the characters possible. But more important, we are able to go inside Tom's mind in what amounts to extensive soliloquies, but with the added advantage of being told years later, when Tom has had an opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the impact events made on him. The effect is somewhat like the sort of prose fiction Henry James advocated, in which we see the story reflected through a mind with human limitations, either by telling it in the first person or by using third person but limiting it to the consciousness of one person. Students might benefit from comparing this with short stories and novels they have read. Steinbeck's "Flight," for example, uses a more dramatic point of view than does this play, remaining outside characters' minds and denoting their thoughts only through their physical reactions.

The use of the narrator is clearly advantageous for the sort of story being told. But it does bring up another problem: should scenes at which the narrator could not be present be dramatized? If Williams were to write entirely in accord with the conventions of first person or third person limited prose, he could not show scenes at which Tom was not present, such as Amanda's return after finding that Laura has dropped business school or the long conversation between Laura and Jim. But he realizes the significance of visualizing these scenes, so important to the tragedy of Laura, which is the cause of the tragedy of Tom. So he takes a middle ground between the two conventions, allowing Tom to narrate a reaction to scenes at which he was present but also dramatizing scenes which made a great impact on his life although he was not present.

To a lesser degree, commentary on the action is also given to the reader, although not to the theater audience, through analytic statements in the stage directions. Presumably these would serve the director of an actual performance as suggestions regarding the mood and atmosphere of the presentation. They are also suggested by the music, which provides, as Williams says in his production notes, an "extra-literary accent" (511); for, as Tom explains to us, "The play is memory . . . . In memory everything seems to happen to music" (439). The careful directions for dim lighting, focused on that which Williams wishes us to watch as the moment, provides a further reminder that this is memory, and memory by the emotions as much as by the intellect.

Williams has attempted to capture the prose fiction advantages of presenting a character's thoughts and the atmosphere in which he lives; he also achieves the advantage, if it is an advantage, of the chapter heading in showing what is to be particularly noted in a section. The screen images, which several directors have elected to omit, usually consist of a particularly important line from the following scene or of a picture which points up such important lines. Many modern novelists have dropped chapter headings, often because they believe that the emphasis should come through the writing itself. Perhaps the same could be said about this screen device.

Williams, like many modern playwrights, has found it advisable to modify the conventions of tragic structure to fit them to modern values. Democratic values and the suggestions of such men as Darwin and Freud that all men are basically alike, are related to the animal world, and are bound by environment and heredity have made the high nobility of a Macbeth or an Oedipus difficult to believe in our time. Part of the tragedy of the traditional protagonists was that they pulled their nations down with themselves, despite their noble intentions. But today we rarely see nobility in a man who has the power to cause his nation to rise or fall. He is anti-democratic, often he is considered to be monstrous or even insane. So the first step which the writer of modern tragedy must take is to find a new sort of protagonist. Probably the most frequent choice is a man like Tom, a man bound by his environment and heredity but made noble by his heroic struggles to escape.

But another problem is that death is a means of escape; therefore death is not a particularly tragic state for such a protagonist. Therefore many of these playwrights, including Williams, end with the tragedy of a life empty of hope. Tom has given up hope of helping Laura in order to further his own ambitions; yet he finds that the thought of his sister haunts him so that he has no energy for these ambitions. The drama is one of choice of a way of life, but we know that the choice really doesn't matter, since, whatever he does, the hero is caught and will be unable to use his talents or to significantly help his family.

Williams has taken the drama, a highly regularized, exacting form, and made it flexible enough to put across subject matter entirely within the mind of a man, a sort of material usually reserved for prose. Little changes in the external circumstances of Tom; the tragedy is in the death of his hopes for change, of his struggle against that which limits him. In The Broken World of Tennessee Williams, Esther Merle Jackson says of such changes in form, ". . . each new concept of drama has reflected something of the past. Each form, however, has adapted a residue of traditional elements in a new and distinctive arrangement. In this sense, form is the projection of human understanding into sensible shape; it is a momentary union of traditional meanings and individual discoveries."

The discussion here has centered rather specifically around the matters of the use and transformation of convention which students should understand by the time they have finished the unit. Yet it is necessary that they understand the play generally before they can fully comprehend these important specifics. And it is certainly a play worth understanding generally; it is a worthwhile piece of literature as well as an excellent example of the concepts students should derive from the unit. So you may find that more general discussion is necessary than is indicated here. The study questions are for the most part designed to assist students in gaining insight into the whole play; it is expected that the specific concepts of convention and originality will be emphasized in class.

You might wish to play recordings of one or two scenes for the class. Williams himself reads a long excerpt from the play on Caedman record TC 1005. The whole play is on Caedman TRS-S-301.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the symbolic meaning of (a) glass (b) jonquils (c) the movies (d) the fire escape --The first three symbolize the dream worlds into which Laura, Amanda, and Tom escape. The glass also points up. Laura's fragile, easily injured feelings. Williams himself discusses the meaning of the fire escape on p. 447 of the text although of course the class is free to disagree with his interpretation.

2. Reread pp. 498-500, watching for Laura's and Jim's ways of looking at the unicorn and at the breaking of its horn. What do these attitudes show about the pair?--Laura sees the animal as something entirely different from others, but Jim sees it as "the little glass horse with the horn," just as she sees herself as entirely different because she is crippled, but he sees her as a normal girl with a slight defect. She understands how much better the unicorn might feel when he is like the others; Jim finds this idea humorous. We might say that she gives the broken unicorn to Jim, the person who has brought her the closest to being a normal girl.

3. If you read The Mayor of Casterbridge last year, consider the ways in which Michael Henchard's tragedy is like Tom's.--Both are tragedies of isolation, in which the main character attempts to free himself from family responsibilities so that he can develop his ambitions. Both show how personal problems can interfere with the use of a man's talents.

4. Much of what Williams has to say is about problems of communication, particularly between generations. Consider whether the people in the following pairs can communicate their feelings; if so, what, and if not, why not: (a) Tom and Amanda (b) Tom and Laura (c) Laura and Amanda (c) Laura and Jim --Note the different manner of speaking of each character and the different dream world in which he exists, breaking out only in such moments as when Tom says he understands that his mother loved his father or when Jim talks about the unicorn and dances with Laura.

5. Consider the effects of the stage directions, particularly the following: (a) Tom is dressed as a merchant sailor from the beginning (b) The prominence of the father's picture (c) Tom often motions for music and special lighting (d) Laura is often seen in a bright beam of white light --You will probably want to read the production notes at the end of the play and possibly to have good students read them before discussing this question.

THE PLACE OF VALUES IN LITERATURE

TEACHER VERSION

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the central concerns in literature is with man's relations with other men. As an author attempts to describe these social relationships, he also inevitably deals with the various sets of values or beliefs held by men, for these are what govern their actions. On a larger scale, as the author creates a poem or a story, he himself either presupposes or establishes a set of values by which the characters' actions or beliefs can be judged or evaluated. The author's set of values--or, more accurately, we can speak of the "world view" created within the work of literature--is expressed through the narrator, through the results of the plot, and through the choice of rhetorical stances and connotative words. It is around literature's concern with values, both those of characters and of the work itself, that this portion of the curriculum is built.

From the time of Horace on, people have asserted that the function of literature is not only to please but also to teach; and most often, people have claimed that what is "taught" by literature is a set of values, either ethical or aesthetic or practical. Such a statement is perhaps an overemphasis. But while it would be absurd to say that all authors deliberately set out to instill their value systems in their readers, it would be equally absurd to say that none of them do. The point we wish to make to the students in this unit is that all literature, dealing as it does with human experience, deals in some way with values. The ways in which authors suggest or teach values--whether they present their ideas discursively, that is, directly to the reader, or presentationally, that is, through a dramatic scene--will be our concern in another unit of this curriculum, one on the rhetoric of literature. For the time being, in this section of the curriculum we will be concerned with the different values presented in literature rather than with the different methods used to present these values. Our concern is thus with an important subject of literature, rather than with the rhetoric or point of view used to persuade us to accept that subject.

Our first job in this unit is to show the students that each work of literature contains or proposes certain values. This is no easy task, and to determine exactly what set of values the author is establishing will require close consideration of each work. The work's system of values may be very simple or very complex, it may be the main concern of the work or lie in the background, but in either case, there are several means by which we can determine what values are being upheld. First, and perhaps most obvious, is to see that values are explicitly established by the narrator of the story or poem. It is important to remember, however, that because the narrator upholds a particular virtue does not necessarily mean that that virtue is supported by the entire work, for we are all aware of flawed or unreliable narrators. The second means to determine the acceptable values is from the action of the plot; that is, we discover which values work best in the system of rewards and punishments made evident in the conclusion of the work. In other words, knowing which characters come out well and which are defeated may lead to the acceptance or denial of the values associated with these characters. But this is no sure test either, for there are many satires in which the good guys go down to defeat (in which case, perhaps, we admire the ideals of those characters but we see the ideals are impossible to uphold in real life). A third method to determine the established values is to examine the rhetoric of the work, the implications of the language or imagery used to describe the various characters or various actions (a flawed narrator would, of course, invalidate this means).

On the whole, some combination of these three methods is perhaps most adequate in determining the set of values assumed or discussed in the work of literature. The following discussions of each work do not always explicitly discuss narrator's values, outcome of plot, or rhetorical devices but this may be done--and would perhaps provide an easy introduction to each work for the students--through applying three questions to each work: 1. What values does the narrator directly support? 2. How does the outcome of the story or poem support these values? 3. What connotative words or other rhetorical devices do you find to support the narrator's view? The answers to these questions may help answer other general questions the student asks about literature: What is the purpose of literature? How does literature apply to me? If our unit can suggest answers to these questions, it will have performed an important function.

The central point of this unit is therefore that every work of literature presupposes or establishes a system of values. In the process of discussing this point, we will look at some works which utilize or assume a simple set of values and at others which recognize that values are not so easily determined, that many values conflict.

The first section of the unit is composed of works which presuppose a set of unquestioned values or which present an established morality with a simple conflict between the good and the bad. This simplicity of values does not necessarily mean that the literature is poor, but probably the point will be obvious that much of the literature and other art forms which the students are familiar with, such as western stories or spy movies or comic strips, often utilizes an easily accepted set of values. The poems to be read in this section are all familiar, expressing either an optimistic assurance in certain values or a distaste for particular aspects of this world. For example, Blake's "The Lamb" is an innocent celebration of good, while "Crossing the Bar" and "Say Not The Struggle" express belief in a larger meaning in life. The poems which follow these are critical of man: both Vaughan and Wordsworth find fault with the world, but for different reasons, while Hood's "The Song of the Shirt" is a poem of social protest. All these poems have one thing in common though: they accept or assert values without questioning them. The short story that follows, Tolstoi's "Three Arshins of Land," also shows little doubt about what is good and what is bad, as it tells a familiar tale of greed.

The second section of the unit, necessarily the longer, deals with conflicts between two sets of values. The first three poems and a story suggest a possible answer to Clough's poem above, for they present men who have lost their faith and can no longer accept the old values: Tennyson expresses complete doubt in the purpose of life; Arnold sees doubt on a universal scale, while Hardy presents an isolated man's struggle; Pritchett shows the loss of faith in a modern teenager. The poems in the next group are not connected thematically, except in presenting a conflict of values. Owen, for example, overturns an old cliché about honor in war, while Jeffers postulates a surprising origin for men's values. The short story by Conrad presents the conflict of two whole societies, and finally, the novel Billy Budd illustrates how extenuating circumstances can interfere with enforcing a strict code of values.

From the discussion of these works of literature, certain conclusions about different value systems can be drawn. Besides discussing the merits of the particular values the work promotes, we will want to generalize somewhat about the nature of the value systems. One of the most important points to be made is the difference between fixed and relative values. Probably the single situation which characterizes the works in the last section of this unit is that in each work an individual is disagreeing with a fixed set of values. There are many such fixed moralities, the most common,of course, being codes of law (which include such naval regulations as those in Billy Budd) and religious beliefs (which, with our Christian tradition, assume overwhelming importance in English and American literature, as in the poems by Blake, Vaughan, and Arnold). Another system of values which is less clearly established but which frequently occurs in literature is a "natural law," standards in accordance with the laws or urges of nature (as we see in the works by Wordsworth and Conrad). Since fixed values, such as laws or religious beliefs, are not subject to much alteration, they create many conflicts in a character's life. An opposite kind of value presents a different sort of problem; that is, completely relative standard, where each choice should be made according to the circumstances of that situation only and not according to any previously established standard, which might not adequately apply. Thus the problem in Billy Budd is that the navy requires that murderers of ship's officers be hanged even though in this case the boy is naturally innocent and the dead officer morally corrupt. We can see established, then, some sort of continuum of values, with rigidly fixed standards at one extreme and a completely relative standard at the other extreme. Most dilemmas or conflicts of values in literature seem to occur when a situation calling for a relative judgment opposes the character's fixed standards.

The discussions which follow will bring these and other points up again as each attempts to provide a reading of the literary work. You will not always agree with the readings below, but the general approach to the analysis of values in literature will provide some guidelines to discussing the values each work upholds. The starred questions at the end of each section repeat the questions in the Student Version, and the answer for each question is provided in the prior discussion of the work.

II. ASSUMPTION OF VALUES IN A LITERARY WORK

There is a great deal of literature in which, as the author is expressing his opinion or giving a picture of any particular object, he simply assumes that the reader's values are the same as his own. Even when the author is primarily concerned with convincing the reader that he should place certain values on certain things, he will often not show any awareness that the reader might object to his evaluation. In other words, many poems assume that the reader will automatically agree with their statements. Such a line as Burns' "My love is like a red, red rose," for example, expects the reader to see roses as a proper comparison for the lady love, and not think that violets would typify her better. Even in poems that deal with much more serious matters, with the origin of good or with the meaning of life, we will often find the poet expects us not to argue with his presuppositions.

Such a group of works are those in this first section of the unit. Here we find that our evaluations of the poem's subject have been presupposed by the author. In some cases, we will not care to object; in others, however, we may want to disagree. For example, we might agree with the narrator of "The Song of the Shirt" that the wretched social conditions under which the seamstress lives should be changed, yet find it difficult to agree with the speaker of "The World Is Too Much With Us" that a return to nature's principles will solve our problems of everyday life. Such objections are occasionally to be expected from our students, too, and we will then have to be able to explain why we should read literature with which we disagree. In fact, a spirited discussion of how completely we should accept the statements of a work of literature--whether we should see the poet as a seer or prophet, or (to go to the other extreme) merely as a man putting his opinion up for discussion--would be most valuable in this section of the unit. At any rate, the point is that in these works there is an unquestioning assumption of values, even when values are the central subject of the work.

A. Three Affirmative Poems

The first three poems have been included because they are similar in one obvious way: all have a clearly optimistic outlook on life, asserting goodness, innocence, or hope. This is, of course, not unusual in poetry, but these poems are so completely affirmative, that there is scarcely any note of doubt in any of them. The first poem, Blake's "The Lamb," is, in fact, unique revealing not even the slightest indication of awareness of evil in the world pictured by the narrator. The other two poems, however, do recognize the existence of darker things in life, death and the lack of faith, but refuse to be much concerned about them. Each poem, then, begins from a predetermined point of view in assuming that certain things are good or proper and in failing to question this assumption.

1. "The Lamb" by William Blake (p. 226 Immortal Poems)

In examining the values with which this poem deals, we find that it declares complete belief in the good and the innocent, praising the innocence and purity of the lamb, the child, and the creator, Christ. Such an unquestioning attitude held by an adult would perhaps be considered simple or gullible, but in the second stanza we find the narrator is a child himself, so the questions are naturally limited by the child's lack of experience in the world. Because we see the speaker as unaware of evil, as limited by his unformed attitudes, we more readily accept his statements. And, though we have some reservations about the narrator's ability to judge, at the same time we can appreciate the whole poem as a pure expression of simple faith in the goodness of God and his creation.

The poem is structured so that the first stanza presents a series of questions about the origin of the "Little Lamb" and the second stanza provides the proper answer to these questions. But even without the answer, the questions in the first stanza, their wording and tone, tell us a great deal about how the narrator views the lamb's creator. Because the lamb's pastoral existence is seen as an idyllic life; because he has been provided with food, clothing, and a voice to make "all the vales rejoice," the creator which the questions imply is not hard to picture: he must have been good and kind to care so much about the welfare of his creature, the lamb.

In the second stanza, of course, we get the child's answer to his own question; the creator is Christ. But we also see that the child (and perhaps, by extension, all of God's children) is compared with the lamb. In other words, the child's life is the same idyllic life as the lamb's because the creator has not only called himself a lamb, but also became a child. So, the complete protection and concern which the creator exercised over his creation is declared when we see that he became part of his own creation: "I a child, and thou a lamb, / We are callèd by His name." The poem then ends with the complete assurance of God's goodness and mercy in the twice-repeated blessing the child bestows on the lamb, "Little Lamb, God bless thee."

Your students will probably have little difficulty in discovering what values are upheld by the narrator of this poem; innocence, simple faith, purity, are all revealed in a straightforward manner by the child. And the point should readily follow that the poem is as much about the child as about the lamb and his creator, that even the child's own innocence is additional proof of Christ's goodness. Some discussion about how we, as readers, should judge this narrator is very important, then, and we should decide how much our distance from the child affects our opinion of his statements, so as to show that the poet behind the child-narrator has provided two instances of innocence and purity in the creation.

Questions:

*1. What is the speaker's attitude toward the lamb? What words suggest the lamb's idyllic life?

2. What sort of answer to the questions in the first stanza can be supplied without reference to the second stanza? In other words, what characteristics of the creator are implied?

*3. Who is the creator, according to the speaker? Does his character match that implied by the first stanza?

*4. Who is the narrator of the poem? What effect does this knowledge have on your opinion of what he says?

5. How much of what the child says should we be willing to accept as true, and how can we avoid arguing with the poem?

2. "Crossing the Bar" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (p. 397 in Immortal Poems)

Tennyson's poem about the proper approach to death is considerably different in subject, tone, and style from Blake's lyric, but the point that all literature deals in values is clearly just as applicable. Here, however, the values are expressed less directly than in Blake's poem, more through metaphor than statement, though the last two lines express explicit belief in a "Pilot" through life. "Crossing the Bar" is always printed last in any edition or selection of Tennyson's poems and properly so, for it is an instruction on how to meet death. Beginning with images merely suggestive of death--the traveller putting out to sea and the tide withdrawing over the bar in the harbor--the poem eventually concentrates more completely on the implied meanings of the images--on the closeness of death, the return to eternity, the immortality of the soul.

Before we analyze the values assumed by the speaker, a brief discussion of the structure, as it supports the meaning, of the poem is necessary. The poem divides into two parts of two stanzas each. The first two stanzas present images of a journey on the sea and of the withdrawing tide, using words with obvious connotations of death and tranquility. The last two stanzas are constructed so that line by line they correspond (in the structure of the phrases and sentences) with the first two stanzas. However, this last part of the poem has moved us closer to death; the discussion of death is much more direct, though it still relies on the journey and the sea motifs.

The poem begins by setting the time and the occasion: "Sunset and evening star, / And one clear call for me!" The images of sunset and star clearly enough suggest death or old age. For the time being, we are uncertain what the "one clear call" is, but we are sure it cannot be denied; the later discovery that it is the call of death fulfills this expectation. Then the poet asks that when he puts out to sea, or dies, there be "no moaning of the bar"; some details about the structure of harbors will have to be supplied here. Extending across the mouth of most harbors, there is usually a sandbar or some other such bank. The "moaning of the bar" thus occurs when the water is pulled over the bar at low tide and makes a low, "moaning" sound. Instead of this situation, the speaker wants a full tide, that goes out slowly and quietly, so that we are unaware of it; in other words, he wants to die peacefully without pain or struggle. The 7th and 8th lines bring up the image of the tide returning home to the sea, and because the word "that" is ambiguous, we easily enough see that the soul or traveller is also turning home. In general, then, the first half of the poem has merely presented suggestive images.

The third stanza begins with a repetition of the pattern of the first stanza: "Twilight and evening bell, / And after that the dark!" But now, we find ourselves more aware of death, with the progression from sunset to twilight, and from evening star to evening bell (with its more specific connotations of death and prayer). When the next two lines repeat the phrasing of lines 3 and 4--"And may there be no sadness of farewell, / When I embark" as compared with "And may there be no moaning of the bar, /When I put out to sea"--we find the speaker discussing his death less metaphorically, more explicitly. The fourth stanza continues this method; the poet speaks directly of being removed from life--"from out our bourne of Time and Place"--by the sea to a place where he comes into a new relationship with his "Pilot" (a place reminiscent of the "home" of the tide in line 8). The Pilot here is clearly an image for God, and the certainty of the Christian belief in life after death being affirmed here is heightened by the biblical allusion to I Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face" (which the students should remember from their reading in the unit on literary difficulty). The whole point seems to be that the speaker, after death, has simply arrived at a fuller, closer relationship with his God.

Throughout the poem, in attempting to describe his hopes and attitudes about death, the speaker has been assuming certain things. He believes, for example, that death comes best quietly and slowly, that death is no time for mourning because it is the return of the soul to its maker, that the soul is immortal in escaping "Time and Place." Probably the students will find other assumptions about death or an afterlife expressed or suggested in the poem. Some, for example, may argue that the speaker is not so sure about his beliefs--for he says "I hope"--and to a certain extent this objection may be valid; but since the speaker may be expressing uncertainty about his own acceptance by the Pilot as well as uncertainty about the existence of the Pilot at all, the word "hope" is ambiguous and the question undecideable. It is clear, however, that there is a larger framework of beliefs about immortality and eternity behind the poem, and that is the point we want to make.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What is the subject of this poem? What things in the first two stanzas suggest this topic?

*2. Compare the first two stanzas as a unit with the last two stanzas. How are they similar? In what general way are they different?

3. What do the words "sunset," "evening star," "moaning of the bar" all seem to suggest? Explain what the speaker means by the "moaning of the bar." What contrast is made in the first two stanzas?

4. How do the connotations of "twilight," "evening bell," "the dark" differ from those of the words in question 3? What kind of progression is apparent?

*5. What does "our bourne of Time and Place" mean? What is the speaker assuming about his soul?

6. Who is the Pilot? Where does the phrase "face to face" come from? What sort of beliefs do these words suggest the speaker holds?

*7. What seems to be the speaker's main point about death? What things has he assumed in order to believe this?

3. "Say Not The Struggle" by Arthur Hugh Clough (p. 426 in Immortal Poems)

With Clough's poem, we again turn to a more directly didactic poem; it is, in fact, an exhortation to a non-believer, to a person who has just declared that life is futile, that he is fighting insurmountable odds, and that conditions will never change for the better. The speaker directly addresses such a person, attempting to persuade him to hope, declaring that even the smallest amount of effort may pay off largely. And we will find that every part of the poem, the battle imagery and the examples from nature, is subordinated to this central purpose, the persuasive argument.

The poem begins with the admonition to "Say not"; the syntax is somewhat unclear but evidently the reader should "say not," for the next four lines, that struggle is useless, that fighting is vain, that the odds are overwhelming, that no progress can be made. The argument against these statements actually begins in the second stanza. The first line of this stanza is quite difficult to understand, for the speaker creates an analogy which assumes knowledge of the pessimist's past hopes: He says, "If hopes were dupes"--that is, if you have been duped or misled by hopes--"fears may be liars"--your own fears may be causing you needless worry by also proving false. To prove that "fears may be liars," the speaker expands the image of a battle for assurance, an image used throughout the first stanza, and thus turns the pessimist's argument on himself by saying that he may be defeating himself with fears: "But for you" your comrades may possess the field.

To prove this point, that a little effort by one person may carry the larger battle, the next two stanzas present examples. Both examples are drawn from nature, one of streams flowing into the sea and one of the sun rising and lightening the world. The idea of the third stanza is that while, in the center of the struggle for assurance, one may see no advance, as the waves of the ocean make no advance up the shore, this does not mean that a larger advance is not being made, for the little streams are "flooding" into the ocean, making it larger. Each small personal struggle, then, adds to the forces against doubt. The fourth stanza is a second instance of this idea, explaining that while the sun may appear to be very slowly climbing the eastern sky, its influence has already begun to lighten the west. The point is apparently that a little effort now has much larger effects in the future--toward the west.

The speaker in the poem thus refuses to consider the possibility of defeat in the spiritual struggle. One important point, however, needs to be further discussed: how effectively the speaker establishes his argument. There are a few problems which perhaps limit the effectiveness. First, his argument in the second stanza is largely hypothetical; he has established an "if" and thus can only say "may" for assurance. (In the next two stanzas, he speaks without that reservation for he says, "Comes silent, flooding in, the main.") Secondly, the speaker's argument and evidence are entirely metaphorical; proper to poetry but non-logical. In addition, the last two stanzas are of course natural images, not necessarily applicable to a human situation.

At best, then, it seems we can only say this poem is an assertion of hope and assurance, that the author seems to have presupposed the struggle is worthwhile, and that his argument does not sufficiently support him. And in this assumption of values, the poem is like Blake's and Tennyson's. It differs, however, in its direct attempt to convince the reader that struggle is good, that lagging behind is bad, and perhaps for this reason we ask for more evidence that his evaluations are correct. At any rate, the poem will provide an instance of direct argument about values.

QUESTIONS:

*1. To whom is the poem addressed? What things has this person said which the speaker disagrees with? What is the speaker's main point?

*2. What sort of argument is being advanced in line 5? Does the rest of stanza two support this contention?

*3. What seems to be the purpose of stanzas three and four? How are they related to the argument of the poem?

*4. Do you think the speaker has sufficiently established his point? What are the strong and the weak points of his argument?

5. How does the speaker use connotation to support his argument? How does the choice of battle imagery and the use of such words as "tired" and "flooding" and "bright" support the argument?

6. Writing assignment: Write an essay, using the three poems above as evidence, analyzing the different ways in which a poet's preconceived values may be expressed in a poem, no matter what the subject.

7. Writing assignment: Write an essay discussing any assumed values you may have about childhood, death, or belief, comparing your values with those expressed in one or more of these three poems, explaining why you automatically assume these things without questioning them.

It should be reiterated that the central point of this section of the unit is to see these poems as all working from a previously accepted set of values despite their widely differing subjects. The discussion can bring this out best perhaps by asking hypothetical questions about what values might be expected to be held in a poem about children and lambs or what the students' own values are about death. Hopefully, the three poems above will be sufficient to indicate how some literature maintains a basically optimistic, rosy outlook on life. The next small section of the unit will show poems finding fault with the world as it is, suggesting change, but not doubting that the values of the speaker are the proper ones to solve the situation.

B. Three Critical Poems

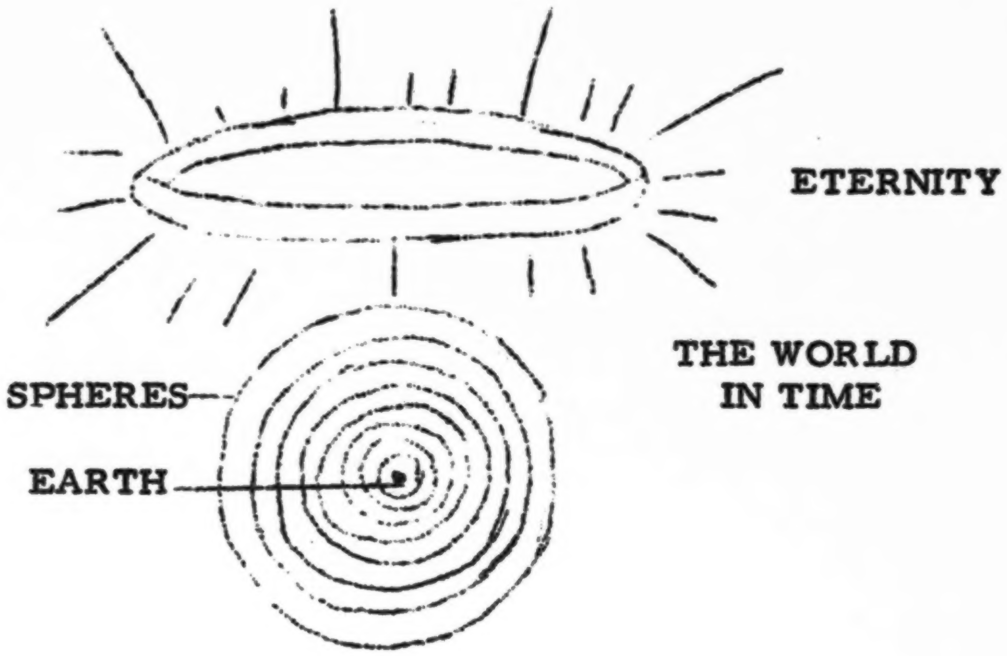
The poems next studied, as well as the short story to follow them, are certainly less optimistic than Blake, Tennyson, and Clough. Yet even though they are critical of sinners, of material concerns, of social conditions, even though they present a more pessimistic (perhaps, too, more realistic) outlook on life, they still do not question the position from which they judge the world. The speaker in Vaughan's poem, for example, is as assured about the efficacy of the Christian faith as the speaker in Clough's poem is about the value of struggling, even despite his recognition that many sinners ignore the promise of eternity. Wordsworth too is sure that a return to nature will solve the problems of the modern world, and while Hood offers no explicit alternative to the conditions he pictures, it is apparent that such social conditions are absolutely wrong and not to be tolerated. The speakers of each poem, then, are sure they know what is best for the world.

1. "The World" by Henry Vaughan (p. 145 in Immortal Poems)

Vaughan's poem is certainly the most clearly Christian poem we will read in this unit, working within the total framework of the Christian faith. As such, the students may be able to bring the knowledge they have of Christian beliefs to bear on the poem in order to identify the values held by the speaker in his vision of the universe. In addition, it is a highly mystical poem, but this difficult point in theology need not concern us here if we simply accept the vision and not question its source.

Structurally the poem consists of two parts: a vision of eternity and the world, and then the speaker's reaction to that vision. The vision extends to the second line of the fourth stanza; the reaction of the speaker finishes the poem. Within the vision, however, there are also two parts: the sight of Eternity (which might need definition for the students since it certainly includes the concepts of heaven and immortality as well as endless time) and the sight of the world below.

Eternity is described in less concrete terms than the world: it is a ring of light, "pure and endless . . . / All calm, as it was bright." The ring image is centrally important to the poem for later the speaker plays upon the double meaning of the word, meaning not only a circle, but the ring worn by a bride. The use of the imagery of light is also important, for it contrasts with the darkness that fills the world below. Envisioning this ring of light, the speaker sees beneath it "the world," which in this case is another word for the universe. His is the old conception of the universe, based on the Ptolemaic system of concentric spheres, one for each of the planets, the sun, the moon, and the fixed stars. Of course, more important than the outmoded astronomical theory here is the point that Time goes around in the spheres; the poem centers upon the opposition between eternity in heaven and time in the world, for obviously the eternal should be more sought after by men than the finite. At any rate, the world moves in the vast shadow of Time, not calmly, but "hurled." Since all this is pictured in just seven lines, perhaps a diagram of the vision would be helpful:



THE SPHERES:

1. MOON
2. VENUS
3. MERCURY
4. SUN
5. MARS
6. JUPITER
7. SATURN
8. FIXED STARS
9. PRIMUM MOBILE

The rest of stanza one and the next two stanzas plus three lines of stanza four all describe the world hanging below Eternity. Though the poem is best known for its description of Eternity, it is properly titled "The World" because so much of it is devoted to describing the world's inhabitants.

All of its inhabitants described in detail are foolish or sinful in some way or other, unconcerned about their souls. The first is the doting lover. He is pictured in conventional terms, playing the lute, full of fancy and imagination about his loved one, concerned with the pleasures of love and not with more serious things. The speaker's attitude enters this description through his use of connotation, as it does in all the descriptions. His obvious disapproval is seen, for example, in such phrases as the oxymoron, "Wit's sour delights" and in "the silly snares of pleasure." The last three lines of the stanza make it apparent that the lover could be doing better things, that his real treasure (obviously a treasure in heaven--immortality) is being ignored and scattered while he dotes on his lover, no more significant than a pretty flower.

The entire second stanza is devoted to the "darksome statesman"; why he should be treated at greater length is not clear though it may be because his actions, his sins and greediness, affect many more people than the single lover's. He sins intentionally, and not by omission, so perhaps naturally his evil is more dangerous. The speaker at any rate certainly deals harshly with this statesman (the word means anyone involved in politics and does not have the favorable connotation, as compared with "politician," that it has today). He is described as moving through a fog, slowed by weights and woe, thinking evil thoughts, hounded by many witnesses of his perfidy. Such an evil man has to work secretly, and the description of him as a mole underground is fitting. The list of his sins is long: he takes from the church, he is totally unconcerned about his lies and the misery he is causing. For these sins he is considered more dangerous than the lover, and there is no evidence that he could be saved.

Still other sinners are enumerated in the third stanza; first, the miser whose greed is also shared by thousands of others. This miser, however, is so avaricious and distrustful he hardly dares trust his own hands. But the speaker suggests why this is so sinful: the worldly gold is nothing more in reality than a "heap of rust" or mere "dust," and the miser's failure to follow the biblical admonition to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Luke 12: 16-21) makes his fate sure. Paired with this sinner in his pleasure in material things is the epicure whose pleasure is in sensual enjoyment. While the epicure is the most forthright about living for sensual pleasure, placing "heav'n in sense," there are many others living in excess, enjoying trivial things, whose only difference from the epicure is their failure to admit openly the source of their pleasure.

The fourth stanza shows the hope of reaching the ring of eternity. Some few people already have done so, through continual praise and self-mortification: "weep and sing, / And sing and weep." But the speaker sees that most of mankind will not soar up into heaven on this "wing" and so berates them as fools for preferring darkness to light, for hiding from the truth of day. The speaker apparently thinks this is a simple process until he is set right by someone else. The truth is that not all people are eventually going to get to eternity, for the one real method to get there is through the Church, represented by the Bride of the last line. The ring of eternity has been reserved by the bridegroom, Christ, for those who faithfully believe, for only those in the church, His bride.

Any attempt to list the values at work in this poem would involve a total explanation of the Christian religion, for certainly the poem draws on many aspects of that faith. The principal values which the speaker holds, however, are probably those of the desireability of salvation, the folly of man's sinfulness and blindness to salvation, and the certainty to be had in the church, the immortality of the soul. The poem is, thus, probably the best example we will have of the speaker working from a well-established point of view; his close adherence to the tenets of his faith shows how fixed his beliefs are. This is perhaps, then, the place where an explanation of fixed value systems should come (see introduction).

QUESTIONS:

*1. Make a list of the values assumed by the speaker of this poem. To what religious faith does he obviously belong? How much does his faith seem to affect his opinion of other people?

*2. Compare and contrast the speaker's vision of eternity and the world. Which does he prefer, and how do you know?

3. What does the speaker seem to mean by Eternity? What does he mean by the world?

*4. What four particular sins does the speaker criticize in man? Why do you think he selected these four kinds of people? Why does he devote a whole stanza to the "darksome statesman"?

5. What, according to the poem, is the only way to eternity?

*6. In stanza four, what happens to the ring image that was first used in stanza one? What other significant images are used to compare life in eternity with life in time?

7. If we consider the tenets of the Christian faith as a fixed system of values, what other fixed systems can you name?

2. "The World Is Too Much With Us" by William Wordsworth (p. 260 in Immortal Poems)

Like Vaughan's poem, Wordsworth's also criticizes the world, though for different reasons. For one thing, the speaker means something else by "the world" than the universe or even the earth. He is here primarily concerned with our everyday, humdrum life, particularly with our materialistic concerns like business, for he feels all this conflicts with our being part of nature. Thus he finds nothing praiseworthy in the business world. And like Vaughan, he offers a religious alternative to this life, but it is not the Christian religion.

The Petrarchan sonnet used by Wordsworth divides naturally into two parts, the octave and the sestet, though here enjambment ties the two sections more closely together than would normally be. In the first part of the poem a conflict is set up; we see man in his everyday business concerns and in his relation with nature. The speaker makes his choice apparent from the first line--"The world is too much with us"--so from the beginning we recognize a bias in his descriptions of the working world and nature. For example, he can find nothing in business life that is fulfilling. He claims it takes too much of our time, it is not worth the effort we expend on it, it has divided us from Nature and her regenerative powers--it has, in other words, totally unfitted us to appreciate the beauties around us. Nature, on the other hand, is pictured as peacefully waiting for man to enjoy her: "This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;/The winds that will be howling at all hours, /And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers."

But man is indifferent to what the speaker sees in Nature, and his inability to recognize and appreciate Nature so exasperates the speaker that he declares he would rather withdraw from this world and go back to an old pagan religion that recognized the power in Nature than continue to live in this world. For the speaker, the enjoyment of Nature has become so important, and so fulfilling, that it becomes a worship, a natural religion. This religion of nature would be some kind of return to the elemental, and he seems quite sure this would get rid of some of his unhappiness. Later in the poem we find that he has a particular natural religion in mind; at least his worship of nature would be similar to the Greek religion which found its gods, its sources of power, in nature. He says the sight of Proteus and Triton (both sea gods of the Greeks) "would make me less forlorn."

Thus, like the Vaughan poem, this poem berates man for ignoring a truer, more fulfilling life. Both works have attempted to picture the worldly troubles of man, and both provide alternatives of a religious nature. Also, like Vaughan, the speaker here seems to have very little doubt about the rightness of the alternative to worldly life.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What does the phrase "The world is too much with us" mean? What does the speaker seem to mean by "the world"?

*2. With what does the speaker compare the world? Which of the two kinds of life does he prefer?

*3. What seems to be the proper relationship between man and Nature implied in this poem? Can it be achieved? How?

4. What sort of a "Pagan creed" does the speaker seem to prefer? What do the references to Proteus and Triton mean?

5. Writing assignment: Compare this poem with Vaughan's "The World." How are their approaches the same? How are their values alike? How are their values different?

3. "The Song of the Shirt" by Thomas Hood (reprinted in Student Version)

Unlike Vaughan's and Wordsworth's poems, this piece is only critical of conditions in the world and does not offer a constructive alternative (at least not explicitly). It is therefore a poem of pure social criticism and protest (like the modern protest songs which are often popular with the teenagers and so should be brought into the discussion). The complete abhorrence of the narrator to the woman's working conditions is apparent in the first and last two stanzas, while the song supposedly sung by the woman heightens the emotional effect by being in the first person.

There are two distinct narrators in this poem, then, a third person narrator and the working woman herself. Oddly enough there is no stanzaic or tonal difference between the two, for the first stanza, spoken by the primary narrator, provides the form for the woman's song, setting up both the stanza length and the heavy, obvious meter, using the same repetition in such lines as "Stitch! stitch! stitch!" and the same masculine rhyme of monosyllabic words. The purpose of the first stanza, of course, is to set the scene for the reader, describing the person of the seamstress, and generally picturing her surroundings as "poverty, hunger, and dirt."

The song itself, stanzas 2-10, has two main themes: first, the woman is presented as continually working while she sings; second, her living and working conditions are described as deplorable. The first theme is not only directly stated but even reinforced by such techniques as the incessant repetition of such lines as "Work--work--work" and "Seam, and gusset, and band." All this is evidently intended to provide the rhythm of her sewing; it keeps us aware of the tiresomeness of her work as she laments her condition. The heavy beat of such lines also adds meaning to her statements: that she sews all day, from dawn to dark (stanza 2), that she sews until she is utterly exhausted and then sews on (stanzas 3 and 7), that she sews in the winter and summer and spring (stanza 8). The other theme in the song is the complaint about the conditions of the poor, made even more damning because it is the actual lament of one of the poor.

Most of the stanzas provide some variation on this second theme. Stanza two declares that the woman's condition is no better than that of a slave, even though England is supposedly a Christian country. Stanza four is in part directed to the wearers of the clothes she is sewing, the rich men who, though they have sisters, mothers, and wives, are not concerned about the torments experienced by the woman providing their clothes. This stanza and the following one link her condition closely to death, for such work is really only another form of dying or killing oneself. The woman is paradoxically providing both for her life and for her death: "Sewing at once . . . / A Shroud as well as a Shirt." The woman claims however that she is already familiar with death and is unafraid, for her own gaunt figure resembles "That phantom of grisly bone" because she is so hungry and bread is so expensive. The mention of food causes her also to comment on how little of the other necessities of life she properly enjoys (stanza 6). Then the mention of prisoners working recalls the slaves of stanza two, and she is drawn again into expressing the endlessness of her job. Finally, the last two stanzas of her song express a wish to escape from her normal routine; they involve a return to the idyllic life of her childhood, and she feels sure that just one hour of respite would be sufficient. Her total despair, however, is finally revealed when she says she cannot even weep for grief becuuse it would hinder her work.

The last two stanzas of the poem are a return to the original narrator who is more critical of the woman's conditions than she is. This technique of another narrator provides us with the advantage of a distanced stance from the woman, so that we are more convinced when we are told how dehumanizing her work is, how she is reduced to a machine-like existence, working for the enrichment of the already wealthy, used and unable to prevent it. But her experience is worse than the machine's, if we analyze the image, for the machine is not cognizant of being used; the woman on the other hand has a brain and a heart, is human and is aware of the life she leads. The final stanza of the poem is merely an insistent repetition of the first stanza except for one important difference; line eight of this stanza indicates that the only source for help in this situation is also the creator of the problem--the rich. However, no real hope is expressed for any improvement in the life of the poor; the allusion to the rich is in a line that expresses the doubtful possibility that they will hear: "Would that its [the song's] tones could reach the rich!"

The poem is, thus, totally a criticism of an evil condition. By implication only do we know that the narrator's main purpose is to enlist the reader's sympathy to such an extent that he helps eradicate the evils of poverty. But nowhere in the poem is this mentioned. The values which the narrator holds are apparently the opposite of those things he criticizes; thus he thinks that the woman's work should be lightened, that the Christian virtues of kindness and care for others should be followed, and that the social system as it now exists is unequal. Supposedly, the woman's lament is sufficient to persuade us of the truthfulness of these implications.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What is the effect of having the woman present most of her own story in the "Song of the Shirt"?

2. Analyze the poem metrically. What is the effect of the heavy rhythm and obvious rhyme? How do the three-word lines fit into the iambic trimeter pattern?

*3. Why do you suppose there is so much repetition of certain words and lines? What other parts of the poem give the impression of the woman working while she sings?

4. In what sense is the woman sewing a shroud as well as a shirt (stanza 4)? Why doesn't this disturb her much? Does her fatalistic attitude therefore appall us more?

*5. Is there any remedy for her situation? Would an hour in nature be sufficient? Why do you suppose no alternative is offered as it is by Vaughan and Wordsworth?

6. What is the main point of stanza 11? Why is the woman's condition even worse than that of the machine?

7. What is the effect of the stanzaic variation of stanza 12? Are the rich really blameable for the situation?

8. Writing assignment: In an essay, compare the techniques of this poem with those of a modern "protest" song. How does each achieve its goal of protest?

9. Writing assignment: Considering the alternatives to worldly conditions suggested in Vaughan's and Wordsworth's poems, what alternative seems to be implied in Hood's work? Write a short paper telling what could be done or find out from the library how the conditions of the poor actually were handled in Victorian England.

C. A Moralistic Short Story--"Three Arshins of Land" or "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" by Leo Tolstoi (reprinted in the Student Version)

The story we will read as the concluding work of this section of the unit is actually a fable, meant to illustrate a moral; hence the characterization is light, the happenings are unlikely, and the central idea is obvious. But it has several virtues as a story, too: for example, it is well structured so that the meaning is strongly supported; also, a certain amount of sympathy for the greedy Pakhom is raised, enough to interest us but not enough to make us feel that the outcome of the plot is a tragic defeat. In discussing this story, students should thus probably be asked what the characteristics of a fable are (a unit on fables was taught in the eighth grade) and why that form is particularly well suited to making a point about values, as all these works do.

This particular tale presents the ever-increasing desire for land of a poor Russian peasant named Pakhom. The outcome is predictable from the beginning, for we see all the later action as a contest between Pakhom and the Devil, who has heard him boast that with enough land, he would be afraid of no one, not even the Devil. The first section of the story provides several other ways of guessing the end early. In setting the scene, this section of the tale presents an argument between a city and a country woman (much like our fable of the city and country mouse). The debate is, of course, about the advantages of living in the rich city, as against the virtues of living a simple country life. It will probably be quite clear to the students that everything Pakhom's wife says here at the beginning is upheld by the events which follow: that Pakhom can sell himself; that one day you are rich, the next a beggar; that "Loss is Gain's bigger brother" (that is, that whatever might be gained, a bigger loss is likely to occur, as, for example, Pakhom gains the land at the end but dies as a result)--all these morals are upheld by the story. This first conversation between the women is almost a sermon to the reader, and even before we find out for sure what happens to Pakhom, we almost know that Pakhom's wife has the right advice. We need now only look to see in what way the Devil's promise to get Pakhom "through the land" will be carried out.

The pattern is a familiar one: let a man get a little land and he wants more. Pakhom begins at home by sacrificing nearly everything, including a son, to gain the first forty acres. And, as soon as he becomes a landowner, he begins to abuse his relations with the peasants just as he complained the previous landowner with her superintendent abused him as a peasant. Like the previous owner, he cannot let even the smallest part of his crop be eaten by the cattle of the poor, though he knows from his own experience that that is the only way they can survive. With a fine harvest, Pakhom's confidence and enjoyment grow; so does his greed, until finally his first land seems too little.

The visit of the travelling peasant continues the pattern, for Pakhom hears about more land for the money in a less crowded place. The students may guess even at this early point who the traveller really is, and when Pakhom again becomes dissatisfied with his land, even after he gains another thousand or so acres, the students will probably predict the coming of someone else to tell him about more land. The climax of the story comes, of course, when Pakhom must expend some real effort and a little forethought to gain his next piece of property. Just before he sets out on his journey around his land, however, he is warned by a dream that everything up till now has been part of the Devil's plan, that the travelling peasant, the travelling merchant, the Bashkir chief were all actually the Devil. But Pakhom ignores his warning and so, to a certain extent, fully deserves the result of his greediness. One of the questions that should be asked here is why Tolstoi allowed Pakhom a warning about his greed; why, instead, he did not let the Devil stand laughing over Pakhom's body at the end. The reason seems to be that by providing Pakhom with a warning, Tolstoi lessens the reader's sympathy for the hero when the warning is ignored. The reader can now view the final outcome of the story more objectively, can accept more readily the idea that greed is self-destructive, without feeling sorry for the greedy man. In other words, Tolstoi has altered the story from a potential tragedy to a complete irony. At any rate, Pakhom overextends himself and dies from exhaustion. The final irony of the story is provided by recalling the alternate title "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" for Pakhom gains those three arshins, or six feet, when he is buried.

To analyze the values inherent in this story should not be too difficult. Satisfaction with one's lot, or at least with slightly less than everything one desires, is clearly the moral of the story, whether it applies to the city-country argument at the first or to the fulfillment of our material desires. Lesser points, such as Pakhom's hypocrisy toward the peasants after he gains his first piece of land, and the loss which invariably accompanies any gain, are also explicitly stated. But, as in the poems preceding this story, the values expressed here by the narrator are unquestioningly assumed to be the right ones.

QUESTIONS:

*1. Why do you think the story opens with an argument between the two women over the virtues of city vs. country life? How is it related to the main point of the story about greed destroying itself?

*2. How well does the proverb "Loss is Gain's bigger brother" describe the story's outcome?

3. How much does Pakhom's character develop as the story progresses?

*4. Should we take this Devil literally? Could the force that drives Pakhom from place to place be called the devil in Pakhom? What part does the Devil really play in Pakhom's moves?

*5. Why should the narrator reveal the end of the story in Pakhom's dream before he begins his walk? Does this change our relationship with Pakhom to any extent?

*6. How much land does a man need?

III. CONFLICTING VALUES IN LITERATURE

By now the students have probably talked a good deal about the nature of the value systems used or advocated in literature. To this point, all that the students have been introduced to is a variety of unquestioned values, values which the narrator or author regards as fixed and right. Now, however, the students will find that the questioning of values is often the central subject of literature, for often the author is no more certain that a particular act is right than the reader is. Instead, the author may even be intent on working out the truth as he goes along; for example, in Tennyson's poem below, we see the narrator suddenly lose what little assurance he had in the existence of good. As a result, the student will find in some literature that the good guy is not always the one in white; Mr. Timberlake in "The Saint" is revered by the boy but proves unworthy of the boy's trust.

The final conclusion to be drawn from this part of the unit is, then, that literature provides an immense amount of material concerning values--what is right and wrong, what is beautiful and ugly, what is practical and what is not--to which the reader can go for examples, for instruction, or for intellectual enjoyment. As it is stated here, this aim sounds rather idealistic and perhaps uncosvincing, but given the stories and poems in the second section, the student may be able to discover for himself one of the main reasons to read good literature.

A. Three Poems and a Story about Doubt

The first four works we will read in this section all deal with one problem: doubt. Primarily they question what to believe about God or any other ultimate ideal the narrator might hold, such as the dominance of good over evil. Together, they illustrate the point that any value, no matter how sincerely believed in before, may be open to question; it seems almost as though each of the poems is a direct answer to Clough's poem, "Say Not The Struggle," which so opposed any doubt. Here, there is almost no assurance that things will work out for the best, and each poem seems progressivly less certain and less hopeful of knowing the truth. The story which concludes the series takes a considerably different approach to the same problem, presenting only the loss of faith in a particular religion and not in anything as basic as the final purpose of life. But because the story is about a modern teenager, the students should respond readily, despite the narrower focus. At any rate, these four works should introduce the idea that uncertainty about values is frequently found in literature.

1. "O Yet We Trust" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (p. 391 in Immortal Poems)

This second poem by Tennyson is included to provide a contrast with "Crossing the Bar," for the assurance in a Pilot expressed in that poem is almost totally lacking here. "O Yet We Trust" is one of the lyrics from the elegy, In Memoriam; there, it comes after the speaker--disillusioned by the death of his friend--has gradually lost his earlier idealistic beliefs. Now, he finds himself at the bottom of the pit of doubt about the purpose of man's existence. Few poems present as bleak an outlook on life as this one.

The poet even begins the poem from a position of doubt; there is none of the assumption of values we found in the earlier part of this unit. Instead, the speaker feels so unsure of what is right that he recognizes that blind trust is all that is left to him. All his knowledge, all his previous experience has shown no support for an optimistic view, yet he continues to cling to his faith. The first two lines of the poem thus provide a general statement of the poem's theme: "Oh yet we trust that somehow good/ Will be the final goal of ill." Even here, however, we can detect something of the growing uncertainty that will follow; the word "somehow" adds doubt to doubt, the word "final" puts any surety far in the future. The rest of this three-stanza sentence is a long series of things which the speaker is endeavoring to believe in. Hopefully, good will balance the evils of lines 3 and 4, though the words "pangs," "sins," "defects," and "taints" all suggest the overpowering strength of ill which the speaker sees in the world. Stanzas two and three merely extend the list of things to trust in: that every being has a purpose, and will not be considered waste when God's design has been completed; that even the smallest creatures, the worm and the moth, are important. Stanza four creates a conclusion to this section of the poem by merely restating the first two lines of the poem in terms once again quite abstract. The statement "Behold, we know not anything" reveals how completely the speaker lacks any empirical evidence--or knowledge--of a larger purpose in the universe. Thus, the basic distinction being drawn in these first four stanzas is that between knowledge and faith; since we cannot be sure in any intellectual way that good will triumph, we can only trust or hope.

The word "trust" as it is repeated from the first stanza makes this distinction clear.

Having arrived at a certain equanimity about his faith in good, however, the speaker suddenly falters and overturns this in the last stanza. He declares now that he cannot even have faith, for he calls everything that has gone before "my dream." What has caused him to lose his last shred of faith? It is not that that faith may be falsely placed. It is instead a questioning of his own ability, as a man, to make even a tentative statement of trust: "But what am I?" he asks. In other words, he is not questioning the object of his faith, his God perhaps, but the source of faith, himself. His answer to the question "But what am I?" is metaphorical: he is an infant. This image illustrates at once his lack of knowledge and his inability to articulate any faith:

> An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry.

This last stanza, then, suggests that even the speaker's small amount of assurance, his blind "trust," may be totally foolish, certainly unfounded, perhaps nothing but a selfish wish or dream.

In summary, the poem presents a man with no certainty about the values he wants to believe in; he presents only a tremendous need to believe. The values he wants to accept are much like those expressed in the poems we have already read, particularly Clough's. But his intellectual honesty, that he cannot know that good will result from ill and that he himself is not capable of knowing the truth, is sufficient to cast him into complete anguish. If we as readers separate ourselves from him, however, other positive values are perhaps implied: for one thing, the man exhibits an intense desire to know and is willing to abandon all his previous beliefs for this end. The very act itself, intellectual though it may be, of refusing to falsely believe suggests that it is good that man--pitiful creature though he is--should insist on knowing. We will find the same intellectual action, only supplied by the reader here, more strongly expressed in the next poem.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What is the position of the speaker at the beginning of the poem? Does this change as the poem progresses?

2. Why does it seem so important for the speaker to believe in the ideas he lists in the first three stanzas?

*3. What is the difference between knowing and trusting in this poem?

4. What happens in the fifth stanza? Why does the speaker call all the previous material "my dream"?

*5. Why does the question "but what am I?" change the speaker's mind? Is the believer as important as that believed in?

*6. How well do you think the image of the infant in the last stanza expresses the speaker's spiritual state?

2. "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold (p. 428 in Immortal Poems)*

The ideas in this poem are very similar to those expressed by Tennyson in "O Yet We Trust"; the approach, however, is considerably different. Here the students will find the same expression of complete doubt (though there is an alternative supplied by Arnold not given by Tennyson), but that doubt arises naturally from a particular dramatic situation--the man looking out the window at the sea with his lover--and is not merely asserted as in the other poem. This technique of creating a specific dramatic situation even provides us a better view of the mind of the man working on the problem, for we can separate ourselves more easily from him than from the speaker in the first poem, from whom he differs in at least two important ways.

For one thing, the speaker in "Dover Beach" begins from a very different spiritual status: he is looking at the sea, at the moon over the channel, and feels a calmness and tranquility, a momentary illusion of peacefulness, very unlike the desperate hope expressed in the beginning by Tennyson. Thinking he has found in the moonlit scene a ratification of his own desire for peace in the world, the speaker calls his love to the window to share the view. But as another person nears, the speaker becomes aware of something he did not notice before in the seaview--the sound of the grating pebbles on the beach, caught by the power of the ocean. The knowledge that the pebbles are controlled by the sea and, thus, that all is not peaceful in that scene, reminds him that in reality human relations are no more peaceful. In other words, alone with himself, he can achieve the illusion of peace but when his love comes to the window, the mere addition of another person makes him recognize the real human situation of strife. Thus the note the ocean sounds is a "note of eternal sadness."

In the next portion of the poem, the speaker realizes how eternal that sadness is, for Sophocles heard the same sound long ago. But the speaker says that whereas to Sophocles the sound meant "the turgid ebb and flow/

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*The following reading is indebted in part to William Cadbury, "Coming to Terms with 'Dover Beach,'" Criticism, A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (Spring, 1966), pp. 126-138.

Of human misery," it means something different to him. The thought which the sea allows him to find in that sound is not related to human misery, but to the world's gradual loss of faith in the nineteenth century.

This thought found by our speaker is put in metaphoric terms: faith is called a sea, for the speaker is still searching to find in nature some parallel to the human condition. The gradual ebbing of the ocean below his window makes him think of the great Christian faith which is slowly receding. When that faith was at the full, it was protective and bright and reassuring: "Like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd." But now, as faith recedes, it is withdrawing far, far away, "down the vast edges drear/ And naked shingles of the world" (shingles is the rocky edge of a beach where the pebbles lie). Accompanying the ebbing of faith is the "breath of the night-wind," which, in terms of this poem's light and dark imagery, must mean the conflicts of man, both physical such as wars and intellectual such as the discovery of evolution, which negate what the religion teaches.

The speaker then falls back on the only assurance of any kind he has, personal love for the woman, to add meaning to this life: "Ah, love, let us be true/ To one another!" This final stanza sums up in more general terms the implications of the imagery throughout the poem. The speaker admits that the world they are looking at, the apparently peaceful moonlit sea, is really only a land of dreams--various and beautiful and new--but still an illusion. The reality which conflicts with this appearance is very grim. None of the human values of the religion which is fading are really possible in this world--no joy, no love, no light, no certitude, no peace, no help for pain. Instead, says the speaker, this world is like a darkling plain (a great contrast of images with the moonlit sea at the first of the poem) full of fighting armies, each person struggling but ignorant of why he struggles.

"Dover Beach" thus arrives at the same position as "O Yet We Trust," complete doubt with no assurance of a higher guidance through life. There is some consolation in Arnold's poem, however, one thing which might provide values, and that is the personal love of the man and woman. We as readers find more assurance than that, though, for we can watch the intellect of the speaker struggling to recognize the reality of his existence. It is an active search for assurance, for the speaker says he "finds" a thought in the sound of the sea; that thought is not prompted by the sound itself. This amount of willed action, then, small though it is, works against the complete darkness of what the speaker says.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What is the spiritual position of the speaker at the beginning of this poem? At the end? What does the end say about his vision at the beginning?

*2. Why does the speaker hear the sound of the pebbles only after he calls his love to the window? What do the pebbles seem to represent to him?

*3. Why is Sophocles mentioned? What is his relation to the speaker?

*4. What does the speaker mean by the "sea of Faith"?

5. What help does this man have that the speaker in Tennyson's poem did not?

6. Writing Assignment: Write a paper comparing this poem with Tennyson's "O Yet We Trust." How are they similar in what they say? How different?

7. Writing Assignment: Write a brief essay comparing the use of the sea in this poem and in Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar."

3. "The Darkling Thrush" by Thomas Hardy (p. 451 in Immortal Poems)

This poem in its final stance is much like Tennyson's and Arnold's, but it derives its dark doubt from the landscape the speaker is viewing rather than from any intellectualizing. This poem is different, too, in that there is no progression from doubt to despair, or from faith to doubt, as in the other poems. Instead, the speaker remains in the same mood throughout. The bleak setting weighs too heavily on the speaker for him to change.

The description of this setting, which clearly enough represents the speaker's frame of mind, begins in a casual tone: "I leant upon a coppice gate." It is winter and everything is dark and dreary. A sense of decline, of something left over from better times, is apparent in such words as "dregs," "weakening," and "strings of broken lyres." What it is that has died, leaving "spectres" and "haunted mankind," is revealed in the next stanza: the old century, in this case the nineteenth century, is gone and the whole world reflects the death of the last one hundred years. (It should be noted here that the poem is usually printed with the date, December 1900.) The rest of the second stanza extends the metaphor of death and personifies the century: the corpse, the crypt, the death-lament, the pulse, the spirit--each is seen as some part of the natural setting.

But the third stanza introduces something new into the scene--a singing thrush--that is at variance with the mood of the landscape. The bird has as few reasons for joy as the speaker has; he is "aged . . ., frail, gaunt, and small" and his figure expresses the same bleakness the surrounding landscape does. Still, though his feathers are ruffled by the wintry wind, the bird sings "a full-hearted evensong/ Of joy illimited." All this seems slightly ridiculous to the speaker, for the bird has "so little cause for carolings/ Of such ecstatic sound," if the speaker judges by the landscape. Unlike the Romantic poets, however, who might take heart from the singing bird (as Keats and Shelley did when they heard the nightingale and the skylark), this man refuses to change his mood. Instead, the only cause he can postulate for the bird's song is one he is not aware of: it is perhaps some vague "Hope," certainly insufficient to satisfy or reinvigorate the speaker, which evidently prompts the bird's outburst.

However, because the bird seems to know of some "blessed Hope" while the speaker does not, we as readers are perhaps left with a brighter outlook on the century coming. It seems this poem, then, leaves some faint optimism at the end; probably we think that in a different setting the speaker might find the same Hope. On the whole, though, this is not a light-hearted poem; it expresses almost complete doubt in any improvement over the last century, almost complete doubt in any reason to sing.

QUESTIONS:

*1. How much do you think the speaker's frame of mind corresponds with the mood suggested by the landscape at the beginning of the poem?

*2. To what do the many allusions to death seem to refer? Is the change of century that significant?

3. What is the basic incongruity in the bird's song?

*4. Is the speaker at all moved by the thrush's song? Does he change his original attitude?

*5. Compare this poem with Tennyson's and Arnold's. How are they alike in expressing doubt? How different?

6. Writing Assignment: Write an essay comparing "The Darkling Thrush" with either Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" (p. 322 in Immortal Poems) or Shelley's "To a Skylark" (p. 303 in Immortal Poems). Do you find any instances of direct influence from Keats' poem?

7. Writing Assignment: Write a brief paper comparing the use of imagery light and of darkness in Tennyson, Arnold, and Hardy. What do light and dark seem to represent in all three? Can you suggest any reasons for this similarity?

4. "The Saint" by V. S. Pritchett (p. 27 in 50 Great Short Stories, the eleventh grade short fiction book)

In this story we have another instance of the lack of religious faith, but a more important point here is that the narrator details for us the steps by which he lost his faith. Unlike the poets, he expresses no real regret over his loss of faith. For students to appreciate this poem fully, they should understand the particular religious problems which are discussed. They should be especially aware of the basic premise of the Purifiers' beliefs: that the creator, God, is totally good. As a result, He does not know evil nor does He allow so-called evil things to happen to his creatures. It is a theological argument often debated, and the particular tenets of the little Protestant group imagined in this story are no surprising variation of the possibilities if one accepts the premise. But the specific religious beliefs necessary as a basis for the story are not our primary concern; instead we shall discuss the particular course of the boy's loss of faith, and among other things, attempt to answer the important question of why Mr. Timberlake is considered a saint by the boy even after the boy has lost his religion.

The first sentence establishes the course of the action: "When I was seventeen years old, I lost my religious faith." The first few paragraphs briefly set up the beliefs of the Church of the Last Purification. Then we see the first assault on the boy's faith. It comes from his schoolteacher, but the blind acceptance by the boy of his parents' beliefs--similar to the blind belief desired by the man in "O Yet We Trust"--is sufficient to withstand this attack. The first real questioning comes from the boy himself when he makes an attempt to further understand his religion by answering the question, where does evil--or since evil is an illusion, where does the illusion of evil come from? Having found no answer for himself, he asks his father; but the father does not know either and refuses to discuss the problem. It is with this first questioning that doubt, like an ape, begins to follow the boy around. The ape image will eventually reappear in the story.

About this time, several forces are at work on the boy. First, we are aware of the town's reaction to the new religion. As the boy says (p. 28), the Purifiers become "an isolated and hated people." This, however, serves only to make the boy more defensive. Throughout the relation of the incident with Mr. Timberlake, we are told some of the particular criticisms the townspeople have. They claim that the Purifiers all wear "torpid, enamelled smiles" (p. 29), and they ridicule the idea that Toronto could be the center of new revelation. Both of these criticisms seem to be a defense against the evangelical nature of the church. The boy is troubled by these ideas, obviously, or he would not mention them, and as we become aware of how often the insincere smile returns to Mr. Timberlake's face, we perhaps see some validity in the objections.

Against the town's criticism, we have the boy's intense desire to believe fully, particularly when he can find someone in the church who seems to embody all the beliefs without question. The boy hopes Mr. Timberlake will be a way back to complete belief for himself because he is constantly aware of the following ape. Throughout the following events, the boy perhaps subconsciously knows that Mr. Timberlake is not all that he would like to think he is, that really, the man is middle-aged and out of place among a crowd, that the constant smile and the word "fine" when things are not fine are hypocritical to some extent. The boy dreads the coming punt trip, not only because he knows an important decision might be made in his life, but because he feels it is a bit of condescension on Mr. Timberlake's part, "out to show that he understood the young" (p. 30).

The critical moment comes when Mr. Timberlake is brushed out of the boat by an overhanging willow. As he slowly sinks into the water, the boy's faith sinks with him, for such a proof of "error" as he is witnessing cannot be denied, despite Mr. Timberlake's attempt to do so. The boy suddenly finds himself praying a prayer that conflicts with Mr. Timberlake's prayer, and the ludicrous moment when the boy sees Mr. Timberlake's suspender loops is the moment his faith disappears. From the boy's point of view, Mr. Timberlake sinking into the water is "a declining dogma" (p. 34).

The loss of the boy's faith is immediate. But the story does not end here; for the boy comes to understand the real reason not to believe in the Purifiers' faith as the journey in the punt continues. As the boy watches Mr. Timberlake drying off, he realizes the man is totally human but refuses to admit it. Mr. Timberlake has denied not only the existence of evil, but also the physical facts of his flesh. As a result, he has separated himself from the real world, the world of objects, though he "formally" acknowledges its existence by asking questions about the surroundings as the boat moves on down the river. Instead of living in that "too interesting, too eventful" world (p. 36), "his spirit, inert and preoccupied, was elsewhere in an eventless and immaterial habitation." Mr. Timberlake is thus really only a dull, blind old man to the boy.

The incident in the buttercup field adds a new consideration. As Mr. Timberlake becomes covered with buttercup pollen, he actually looks like a golden saint, ironically after the boy's adoration has gone. Yet, if the man is not a saint of a true religion, he is a saint in another sense. He is saintlike because he is able to stick firmly to his belief despite all the evidence to the contrary. One other important point is made in this section: the religion of the Purifiers, in denying the ugly because it is "error," also denies beauty, because it is sensually perceived, too. Thus the buttercup field fails to please the man, and until he leaves for London, "by no word did he acknowledge the disasters of the beauties of the world" (p. 37).

The short conclusion to the story adds an ironic touch. We find out that Mr. Timberlake has taken the quiet religion of the Purifiers, with its insistence on the spiritual, only as a means to lead an easy life, hoping thereby to prevent a heart attack. In other words, the man was using a religion which denied the body, and its pleasures and pains, in order to keep that body alive. The boy at this point then realizes that the same doubt which had bothered him only somewhat, the same ape, had been at the heart of everything Mr. Thimberlake did, making his whole life a hypocrisy.

This story deals basically with a boy who finds he cannot accept a pre-established set of values or beliefs. However, though one set of values is denied by the boy, another by implication takes its place. The narrator now believes, evidently, in not denying the physical reality in favor of the spiritual illusion.

QUESTIONS:

*1. Describe the tenets of the Church of the Last Purification. What presupposition are they based upon? Is the question of the origin of evil really central to most religious faiths?

*2. What does the ape represent? Why does it follow the boy around?

3. How much has the boy listened to criticisms of the church? How is this reflected in his description of Mr. Timberlake?

*4. Why should Mr. Timberlake's accident cause the boy's loss of faith? Why do you suppose the boy prays Mr. Timberlake will not walk on the water?

*5. Why does the boy call Mr. Timberlake a saint after he gets covered with the buttercup pollen? In what sense is he saintly?

*6. What does our knowledge at the end that Mr. Timberlake was trying to avoid a heart attack do to our opinion of his religiosity? Why has the ape been eating out his heart?

B. Other Value Conflicts in Literature

Besides the conflict of doubt and faith, there are thousands of other conflicting values in literature with which we could deal. For this reason, the following poems and stories were selected primarily because they present a clear-cut conflict between two well-defined sets of values. There is little connection topically between all of these works, though two pairs do appear: Owen and Jeffers both discuss violence and war, and Conrad and Melville are concerned with problems of civilization. Frost's poem, though its symbolic images do not necessarily refer to values, will introduce the idea of choice between two alternatives and the consequences which may follow, certainly something to be considered when one has to make a choice between two values.

1. "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost (p. 504 in Immortal Poems)

This poem is well enough known that no explanation of what it says is necessary. But there are two ways it can be dealt with in this unit. In one case, it can be read as though the choice being discussed were a choice of values. Since the idea of taking one road or another is clearly symbolic of any choice a man has to make, that explanation is quite valid and does not tack on a meaning not in the poem. On the other hand, recognizing that the poem is symbolic, we can discuss several of the speaker's attitudes about the problem of making a choice. Does he, for example, think choice-making pleasant? What considerations are necessary in making a decision? Does he prefer an established way or does he make decisions by himself?

First, the speaker's attitude toward choice-making is apparent when he says he is "sorry I could not travel both/ And be one traveler." So the necessity of making a value judgment is not pleasant but often unavoidable. Second, the man is very careful in making his choice, for he weighs all the circumstances: one road is slightly more worn than the other, and bends into the undergrowth. The other road, because it "wanted wear," is chosen, however. And because he picks "the one less traveled by," we know that this man prefers to make his decisions for himself, prefers to be an individual even though there is comfort in conformity. A third indication of the speaker's attitudes toward choice-making is that he says often the two alternatives in any particular situation are very similar; both of the roads were about equally worn. Fourth, the choice, once it is made, is irrevocable, for he can never travel the other road once he has passed it by. And finally, he recognizes the far reaching consequences of any choice, no matter how insignificant: "And that has made all the difference."

The importance of this poem for us, then, is that it shows even the problem of making a value judgment involves certain values of the deciding person. As we read the other works in this section, we can apply this point by asking the students how wise, for example, the speaker of Owen's poem is when he attacks a favorite maxim about patriotism, or if the recognition of violence as a source of values in "The Bloody Sire" means we must approve war and killing.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What is the basic situation of this poem? What do you think the two different roads might represent?

*2. How careful is the man in making his choice? Why is he so careful?

3. Does the man enjoy making this choice? Why does he hesitate?

*4. In what sense is making a choice between two roads, or a choice in any situation, no matter how insignificant, also making a value judgment?

2. "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen (reprinted in Student Version)

This poem sets out with a limited objective: to disprove to the reader the validity of the proverb from Horace, that it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country.

The poem is constructed so that the main point is not evident until the end, after the speaker has had a chance to elicit our sympathy in his description of the soldier who died by gas. Had the speaker said at the beginning that the maxim was untrue, the reader might have become defensive against the proof to follow. But, by showing the death of the soldier, by working on the reader's emotions until they are highly aroused, the poem convinces us how horrible the death is. It is then a simple matter to show that the concrete truth about death does not match up with the abstract generality about honor.

The description of the march after the battle, of the falling gas-shells and the dying man, has an air of unreality and horror from the beginning. The picture of the tired soldiers at once repels us, yet we also sympathize with their plight. Words like "beggars," "hags," "sludge," "trudge," "lame," "blind," and "drunk" all attempt to picture the return from battle as fatiguing and dirty, while the "haunting flares" and hooting shells give the eerie sense that none of this can be real. But the dropping of the gas breaks this somber scene into one of rapid movement and great activity as the men attempt to put on their gas helmets. The fear and trembling with which this is done is aptly expressed in the "ecstasy of fumbling." The subsequent death by suffocation of one of the men is pictured as a drowning. The misty panes of the helmets and the green gas both make the scene appear to be happening underwater, so the image of drowning, with its additional correspondence of being a death by suffocation, is particularly appropriate. The use of the word "guttering," as of a flickering candle, is also appropriate to the snuffing out of life.

Then comes the description of the dead man in the wagon, with his head hanging over the end, as the men march back. Here Owen has deliberately used images that make each of our senses respond. We are aware of no smells in the smothering death the man has endured, and the speaker also wishes "smothering dreams" on the reader. Our sense of sight comes in the lines describing the "white eyes writhing in his face." Our sense of hearing is played upon in the "gargling" of the blood in the man's throat. Our sense of taste responds to the bitter, "vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues." Our sense of feeling reacts to this same image as well as to the soft "froth" of gas. Thus, only after our emotions are raised to a point of disgust with the death scene is the old saying about honor in a patriotic death introduced; we almost automatically reject it. It becomes even less likely that we should tell "the old Lie" to children after our revulsion at the previous description, and the added contrast between the frantic soldier and the parent speaking calmly to the children makes us aware of how inappropriate the old saying really is.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What is the effect of the first eight lines of this poem? How appropriate are words like "haunting" and "hoots"?

*2. Why does the speaker compare the man's death by gas with drowning? In what sense is the soldier "guttering"?

*3. What does the speaker seem to be trying to do in the description of the dead man on the wagon? What is your reaction?

*4. Why do you think the speaker waited until the end to declare that Horace's maxim is an "old Lie"?

5. Do you agree with the speaker's attitude toward this kind of death? What convinces you?

3. "The Bloody Sire" by Robinson Jeffers (p. 531 in Immortal Poems)

Though this poem was included in another unit, it is worthwhile to reexamine it here. That Jeffers could suggest violence is the origin of the world's values is surprising to many readers; the conflict of values in this poem, then, lies between the speaker and the audience and not within the poem itself.

The poem begins "It is not bad," contradicting our views about war. The speaker calls war "play" though he also says the planes' bombs are "prodigious blasphemies." This seems contradictory until we realize that he means the bombs are blasphemies only to us who hold the old values; from a larger context, he claims this violence of war may produce new values.

His first evidence that all the world's values begin in violence is evolutionary. The antelope would not run so fast if he did not have to escape the wolf; the goshawk would not have such keen eyes if he did not have to hunt for food. And so, on a purely evolutionary basis, putting man in the line of animals, he is right that violence has created the things we value. The next stanza, however, claims that the beauty of Helen of Troy and the message of Christ would not be so well known without the contrasting spears of the Greek battle and the bloody victories of the Romans. To accept the point about either Helen or Christ, we need see them only as products of their times. The great contrast between war and physical love and war and spiritual love is what makes us remember these two figures. So once again, the speaker repeats, "Violence has been the sire of all the world's values."

With this evidence from history, the speaker returns to the present war he is viewing and repeats his statement that it is only play, that something good will probably come from what we consider evil. Violence is "old" in the last line because it has been eternally a part of life on this earth, but perhaps, the speaker insists again, new values will arise from old violence. The poem thus presents a curious duality of view: in the short run, looking only at this war and what may occur, we would say the speaker is optimistic that new values will arise. In a longer view, however, the speaker is thoroughly fatalistic, declaring that the cycle of violence and values is a necessary, eternal circumstance, simply one of the conditions we must face. A recognition of this double point of view is necessary before we can accept the poem's idea.

The students may want to discuss the value of holding either the short, immediate view or the long, historical view; we will need to ask how much distance and objectivity is desirable in our evaluations of things. Another question that can be raised is how the knowledge that values are sired by violence (if we accept the poem's statement) influences our beliefs in those values; do we find ourselves perhaps less convinced of their usefulness and validity?

QUESTIONS:

*1. According to the speaker, why is not the war he is watching bad? Do you accept at first the statement that violence is the sire of the world's values?

*2. What do you think is meant by the term "values" here?

*3. What kinds of evidence does the poem offer to support its thesis? Do you disagree with any of the conclusions the speaker draws from any particular evidence?

*4. Is the poem essentially optimistic about the outcome of the war, or is it on the whole pessimistic?

5. How convincing is the argument in the poem that violence begets new values?

6. Do you think the speaker in Owen's poem would agree with the point made here? Why or why not?

4. "An Outpost of Progress" by Joseph Conrad (p. 88, Short Story Masterpieces)

The central conflict of values in Conrad's story is obvious: it is the conflict between one society, the European, and another, the African. The values of these two forces are almost opposite: European progress is concerned with comfort, money, and occasionally aesthetic objects; African savagery is concerned with survival, propitiation of the evil spirits, and occasionally sensual enjoyment. So, even before the two men, Kayerts and Carlier, come to the trading post, the troubles that will grip them are already forecast.

It will perhaps be easiest here to deal with the values of one society completely before discussing the other. Progress (as the two traders see it) has a definite goal--to bring "light, and faith and commerce to the dark places of the earth" (p. 96). Could the two men live up to that task, the narrator would perhaps not be so critical of them. But from the first they are ill-equipped to do the job. And it is partly the fault of their society. It is in the very nature of civilization that men become more dependent on forms and conventional behavior than on themselves, so when Kayerts and Carlier are thrown into a position requiring independence of action, they cannot achieve it. All of this is made explicit early in the story, in the long paragraph on page 91:

> They were two perfectly insignificant and incapable individuals, whose existence is only rendered possible through the high organization of civilized crowds. . . . Every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd: to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals, in the power of its police and of its opinion.

But civilization creates more disadvantages than just this one of "forbidding [men] all independent thought, all initiative, all departure from routine" (93). Besides making men into "machines" (93), civilization is weak because it and its men are hypocritical. Take, for example, the language in which civilization expresses its aims. The old newspaper that had an article entitled "Our Colonial Expansion" spoke in "high-flown language . . . of the rights and duties of the civilizing work, and extolled the merits of those who went about bringing light" (96). Clearly such abstractions mean nothing in the jungle. The power of mere words over the men--which is the real significance of language--is expressed by the narrator after the men have declared their indignation with Makole who sold the station men to slavers:

> They believed their words. Everybody shows a respectful deference to certain sounds that he and his fellows can make. But about feelings people really know nothing. We talk with indignation or enthusiasm; we talk about oppression, cruelty, crime, devotion, self-sacrifice, virtue, and we know nothing real beyond the words. Nobody knows what suffering and sacrifice mean--except, perhaps the victims of the mysterious purpose of these illusions. (p. 105)

Plainly then, the narrator considers the pious mission that the two men claim to be carrying out is nothing but an "illusion," that all the values of civilization are only illusions. And the ignorance of the men about those aims, about what civilization really means, adds proof to the narrator's contention; when Kayerts and Carlier imagine civilization they imagine "quays, and warehouses, and barracks, and--and--billiard rooms. Civilization, my boy, and virtue--and all" (p. 96).

Further hypocrisy of civilization is apparent in the two-faced actions of the director and superiority over the natives felt by the two traders. The director's dishonesty is in his statement that this new outpost is "a favor done to beginners" when actually he considers the two men "imbeciles" (p. 90). That the two men are weak and unable to live up to the code of civilization is apparent not only from the physical description provided by the narrator, but from their hidden attitudes toward each other. Carlier displays his real opinion of Kayerts early on p. 92; Kayerts' opinion of Carlier comes in the chase around the house: "that brute of a soldier" (p. 110). Then, too, they consider themselves considerably superior to the savages that come to trade. And from the sarcastic tone of the narrator on p. 100, we see that they might not recognize the humanity of the state on workers. In addition, they treat Gobila as a child. All these things indicate the inadequacies of the "civilized" man in approaching the savage.

The values of the savage, on the other hand, preclude understanding of the white men who come. Physically, the savages are splendidly fit to cope with the wilderness, as the description of them in Kayerts' and Carlier's conversation on p. 94 indicates. But intellectually they are mere children, viewing the wilderness with superstition about evil spirits, propitiating their gods with human sacrifices, and failing to understand--like Gobila--that the white men are really human and not immortals. Gobila should, in fact, be studied as the best representative of the true primitive in the story; his innocent reaction to the white men is understandable because in his background is the wilderness that really is beyond man's comprehension. In this story, primitive nature is vast and unpenetrable, bringing "a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive" (p. 91). Throughout the tale, the wilderness is described in this way, as mysterious, overwhelming, incomprehensible, vast: the dark forests, for example, hide "fateful complications of fantastic life . . . eloquent silence of mute greatness" (p. 95); the entire continent is a "land of darkness and sorrow" (p. 100).

If the central conflict is set up in the characters of the white men and Gobila, we also have an example of what happens when progress and savagery are joined in the same person: that is Makola, "a civilized nigger" (it should be explained to the students that the term "nigger" was not used as derogatorily in Conrad's day as it is now, but was a simple corruption of Negro). From examining Makola, it is obvious that the two sets of values do not combine well; in fact, they are considerably altered when Makola tries to serve both masters. For example, the effect of civilization on Makola's savagery is that he is willing to sacrifice his own people for that most important idea of progress--trade for ivory. On the other hand, his basically primitive nature makes him fail to comprehend the real aim of civilization and so he also ignores the values of the civilized when he stoops to selling the men into slavery. The incongruity of the civilized savage is apparent in the first description of Makola: "He spoke English and French with a warbling accent, wrote a beautiful hand, understood bookkeeping, and cherished in his innermost heart the worship of evil spirits" (p. 89).

Makola, however, has one advantage over the white men; he can revert to the savage when he needs to, and thus can get along in both worlds though he does not actually fit in either. But for the white men, their stay in the jungle is an all-out conflict of the civilized with the savage. Indeed, the basic plot of the story is based on that conflict--the incompatability of the two worlds creates a situation where one or the other must win totally. Either the savage must become civilized, or the civilized must become savage. The circumstances from the beginning forecast the triumph of the savage.

The results of the conflict are gradual on the two white men; for five months they are unaware that they are slowly being worn down by the wilderness around them. The first appearance of their decline is physical, for they both get fever. Their first open awareness of the conflict comes when the slavers arrive. Even though Makola hints at what he is going to do (on p. 101), the two men are completely surprised that he could sell the ten station men for six tusks of ivory. Their loss of civilized values appears, however, as they accept what has happened, as they weigh and put into the warehouse the ivory, as they regain their appetite for a "hearty meal" after eating little the previous day, as they call Makola names to ease their consciences (p. 105).

The next step in their losing battle is their realization that the wilderness is closing in on them: they have the "inarticulate feeling that something from within them was gone, something that worked for their safety, and had kept the wilderness from interfering with their hearts" (p. 106). This something is their denial of civilization's values; they can no longer fall back on the old words for comfort. Instead, "out of the great silence of the surrounding wilderness, its very hopelessness and savagery seemed to approach them nearer, to draw them gently, to look upon them, to envelop them with a solicitude irresistable, familiar, and disgusting" (p. 106).

The next factor in their decline is the failure of the river boat to arrive at the scheduled time. They become so nervous that Carlier once in a fit of rage even suggests "the necessity of exterminating all the niggers before the country could be make habitable" (p. 107). It is apparent that their allegiance to progress has become greatly warped in their minds.

But the basic savagery which is really part of these men, though it has been covered by the veneer of civilization, comes out in their fight over a simple cube of sugar for coffee--a sufficiently insignificant part of civilized life to indicate how deeply they have sunk. Now their true nature can come out: it begins with name-calling like "hypocrite" and "slave dealer"; the old forms of civilization--"I am your chief"--mean nothing to them any more; they are reduced to the situation of the chase and the stalk: savagery has won. The comments by the narrator about the balance between life and death indicate just how important a truth of life is involved here. At the first of the chase, life and death hang in the balance, both "had in a moment become equally difficult and terrible" (p. 110). After Kayerts has killed Carlier, "he found life more terrible and difficult than death," and following reflection, he decides "life had no more secrets for him; neither had death" (1. 112). All this means that Kayerts has achieved a nonpassionate, objective position where he can judge the merits of the civilization he had been serving before; with his supposedly clearer awareness, he sees that all his former beliefs appear "contemptible and childish, false and ridiculous" (p. 112). Now he sees all men as fools, for their belief in illusions.

At this crucial point, before the story is resolved, we may ask whether Conrad is claiming that all our values as civilized beings are actually illusion, if we are fools. The clues to the answer lie in the ironic tone of the narrator. Assuming a position at some distance from his characters, the narrator has freely and sarcastically commented on their virtues and their shortcomings; he has been able to see flaws in their ideas and makes fun of them occasionally (for example, in the joke about fetishes on p. 95). And it is he who has told us at the beginning that the values of progress are illusions (p. 105). Thus, at this point of the story where Kayerts reaches the same conclusion, we would expect the narrator to agree with him. But he does not. Actually the narrator speaks from a basically paradoxical position: note, among other things, that he calls Kayerts' thoughts "that kind of wrong-headed lucidity which may be observed in some lunatics" (p. 112). The tone of mockery has not changed either: "He, Kayerts, was a thinking creature. He had been all his life, till that moment, a believer in a lot of nonsense like the rest of mankind--who are fools; but now he thought! He knew! He was at peace; he was familiar with the highest wisdom" (p. 112). These are the thoughts of Kayerts, and his assumption that he now knows the truth about life and death is laughable to the narrator. The narrator's final view is thus somewhat paradoxical but not completely contradictory. He agrees that all of civilization's values and beliefs are illusions and unreal, yet these illusions are necessary for man to do anything at all in life.

And Kayerts recognizes this at the end too; civilization with all its faults is still not useless, for it has put a curb on the savagery he just experienced. Man cannot remain the savage forever. So when Kayerts hears progress calling to him in the form of the boat whistle, he knows he can no longer fit into the world as it is: "Society was calling to its accomplished child to come, to be taken care of, to be instructed, to be judged, to be condemned; it called him to return to that rubbish heap from which he had wandered away, so that justice could be done" (p. 113). Only one course is left for Kayerts. The life of the savage is too revolting. Society with its many faults offers something better, but because he has divorced himself from that society, he hangs himself from the cross which Carlier had replanted firmly in the ground earlier in the story, thus giving another ironic turn to this very ironic story. And the final scene, with Kayerts sticking his tongue out at the Director while hanging from the cross (how much of this obvious Christian allegory should be explained is up to the teacher), indicates the paradoxical position the man was placed in--a position he could not accept intellectually as the narrator must have: that our values are empty illusions but necessary for us to conquer our savagery.

We will thus have to show the student that the final resolution of the conflict in this story lies in the narrator and his seemingly contradictory stance, not in the totally fatalistic attitude expressed by Kayerts near the end. It is a complicated story, a difficult story as far as the conflict of values goes, but it will show the student just how uncertain an author can be about what is good or bad, what should or should not be done, and how he can express this uncertainty in a piece of fiction.

QUESTIONS:

*1. What force do Kayerts and Carlier represent? Are they the best possible representatives?

2. What is there in civilization which unfits man for coping with the savage in nature and in himself?

*3. What is the force against which progress fights? How is it represented in the story?

*4. Where does Makola fit in this struggle as a "civilized nigger"? Does he fully satisfy the requirements of either side?

*5. Trace the decline of Kayerts and Carlier's values. What begins their hypocrisy and what ends it?

*6. What does the narrator mean when he says the values of civilization are illusions (p. 105)? Does this mean he agrees with Kayerts when he says all men are fools (p. 112)?

*7. Exactly what is the narrator's view of the conflict? Which side is he on?

8. Writing Assignment: Compare this story with Maugham's "The Outstation." How does each deal with the problem of civilization?

5. Billy Budd, Foretopman by Herman Melville (p. 57, Six Great Modern Short Novels)

Because Billy Budd is longer and more complicated than other works in this unit, analyzing this short novel requires looking at several conflicting values: at the clash between the good Billy and the evil Claggart, at the discrepancy between nature's laws and the king's, at the narrator's nostalgic longing for the past of Nelson's time rather than for the times that have followed the Great Mutiny. None of these conflicts might properly be called the central one, for they are all carefully interrelated in the story of Billy's career on the Indomitable. To separate them as we do below, then, is to simplify the work of art.

The first conflict of values mentioned, that between Billy and Claggart, is a clash of personality, on the surface. Billy, of course, is an admirable character, the Handsome Sailor (a description of whose characteristics provides a lengthy introduction to the story, pp. 61-62), and is well liked by all the men aboard both ships on which he serves. He is an excellent foretopman, knowing his job as a sailor, but in contrast to his mates he is morally innocent, unaware of the evils of life. He is said to have the "humane look of reposeful good nature" (p. 69), which we admire, though we also recognize that this "simple nature" may be something of a drawback because he "remained unsophisticated by . . . moral obliquities" (p. 71). He is so willing to accept people for what they appear to be, in fact, that he is called "child-man" without "the intuitive knowledge of the "bad" (p. 106); the name given him by the old Dansker--"Baby Budd"--is thus appropriate. Other indication of his innocence are the many comparisons of him with animals: "like the animals, though no philosopher, he was, without knowing it, practically a fatalist" (p. 68), that is, he accepts any event, even impressment, as inevitable; he is also said to be as non-selfconscious as a Saint Bernard (p. 71).

Master-at-arms Claggart, on the other hand, is almost opposite in character to Billy. And because Claggart's looks belie his character, Billy is unaware of the officer's malice: "he looked like a man of high quality, social and moral" (p. 84). Actually, however, Claggart is "naturally depraved" (p. 95), malicious without reason. According to the narrator, such people are rare, for Claggart is not to be confused with the common criminal (even though Chapter 8 explores the crew's rumor that he was impressed on ship straight from the court). Instead, such "madmen" (p. 95) as Claggart have nothing of the "vulgar alloy of the brute in them, but invariably are dominated by intellectuality. . . . Civilization, especially if of the austerer sort, is auspicious to [them]. [They] fold [themselves] in the mantle of respectability" (p. 95). Thus, given the immediate and spontaneous antipathy of the naturally depraved to the naturally innocent, Claggart immediately dislikes Billy, envious of his beauty and his purity.

Captain Vere is less one-sided than the two men, Claggart and Budd, and has something of both their natures in him. For he is both the sailor and the intellectual, the disciplinarian (p. 120) of the world in which Claggart fits so well and the sympathizer with Billy's natural innocence, a sympathy accountable to Vere's interest in philosophy (p. 81) and to his "dreaminess" which leads the men to nickname him "Starry Vere" (p. 80). Thus, when the conflict between Billy and Claggart is brought before him and Claggart dies, Vere is caught between two forces--the attraction of Billy's innocence and his own duty to the king.

The clash between Billy and Claggart is much more than a simple conflict of personality, however. The characters take on a symbolic or representative value which must be recognized if we are to understand the full significance of the confrontation. Billy is symbolic of the larger force of good, Claggart represents evil. This is apparent in the literary and bibilical allusions which the narrator clusters around the two figures. Billy, for example, is innocent not only like a child but like Adam: "a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company" (71; see also p. 115). Thus Billy represents man before the fall, before man was offered the "questionable apple of knowledge" (p. 70). Billy is also described by Captain Vere as an "angel of God" (p. 121), and, most important, the parallels between Billy's life and Christ's are very clear. Both men have an uncertain origin, for Billy says only God knows who his father is (p. 71); both died hanging from a cross-shaped structure; the scene at Billy's death gives the clouds "a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision" (p. 145); Billy is said to ascend (p. 145), and miraculously, there are no muscular spasms in his body as he dies, a "phenomenal" incident (p. 146); both Billy and Christ are revered after their death, for the wood from the spar on which Billy hung was like a piece of the original cross to the men of the ship (p. 152). All these Christian allusions lead to one interpretation at least, that Billy is a Christ-figure and represents the same divine goodness.

Claggart, though not directly compared with Satan, represents the same evil force: there is a "subterranean fire . . . eating its way deeper and deeper in him" (p. 110); his glance has a "serpent fascination" (p. 119) and his dead body is like a dead snake (p. 120); he is called Ananias, the high priest of the Jews at the time of Christ's death, and Vere claims his death is a "divine judgment" (p. 121); he is, in fact, "the direct reverse of a saint" (p. 93). There are other literary and biblical allusions in the novel but they all point to the same interpretation: the conflict between Billy and Claggart is a conflict between good and evil on a very basic level.

The second conflict observable in the novel is that between the laws of nature and the laws of a civilized society. On this conflict depends the outcome of the trial, for Billy is of course the representative of nature; the naval ship, the Indomitable, represents the world of an ordered society, with a strong man at the head of its government, with established decorum and regulations and procedures, with prescribed punishments such as flogging (p. 87) and hanging.

Life without societal order is pictured aboard the first ship on which Billy serves, the Rights of Man. According to Captain Graveling, the ship before Billy came was a "rat-pit of quarrels" (p. 65); most men, when in a state of nature, are without control. But Billy brings a natural order with him, and the superior creature, in this case the Handsome Sailor, dominates. The order Billy creates comes through "a virtue [that] went out of him, sugaring the sour [men]" (p. 65). Most of the men are willing to accept this dominance of Billy, but when one sailor, called Red Whiskers, refuses to follow the natural order, the only means of enforcement is the barbarian one of physical battle.

To some extent, Billy carries the same natural order onto the Indomitable, but because the ship has a hierarchy of officers, Billy's power is diminished and relegated to the hold. Thus, the move out of nature to an ordered society involves a loss of natural freedom, a loss of the Rights of Man. That the navy and the life of a sailor is a life bound by rules and regulations is clear many times throughout the story, and any threat to its rules is a threat to the structure of the whole society; for this reason, the Great Mutiny and the Nore incident dealt with early in the story are extremely serious matters (chapters 3-5); and also for this reason, the Captain is careful to suppress the murmuring of the crew at Billy's death. Apparent from the first, then, is the fact that Billy does not fit in this world: his act of saying farewell to his old ship breaches naval decorum (p. 67).

The situation after Billy kills Claggart is made clearest on page 123:

> In the light of that martial code whereby [the incident] was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places. In a legal view the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimize a man blameless; and the indisputable deed of the latter, navally regarded, constituted the most heinous of military crimes.

The moral dilemma in which this placed Captain Vere, and the arguments both for and against Billy, are all clearly described on the pages which follow and do not need much explanation here. The center of the argument is debated on pages 130 and 131, where Vere recognizes that moral scruple cannot interfere with the working of martial obligation and that the officer's duty is not to Nature but to the King. Besides trying to decide if Vere is right, students can center their attention on the extenuating circumstances of the case: How much does the wartime situation affect Vere's opinion? Is he perhaps too anxious because of possible mutiny? Does Billy's flaw of being unable to speak at crucial moments in any way lessen his guilt? Should Claggart's purpose be ignored as Vere claims? None of these are easy problems to solve, but the complexities of fixed value standards in conflict with relative value standards can be thoroughly explored through such a discussion.

The third important conflict is that which occurs in the narrator's attitude toward the events he relates, for certainly the narrator speaks ironically on occasion; he seems to approve of the old order before the Great Mutiny as much as he recognizes its inequalities and miscarriages of justice. That the narrator considers his story particularly important is evident in the Preface on page 60:

> The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which as every thinker now feels, involved a crisis

> for Christendom not exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other era whereof there is record.

But why is the story of one sailor's hanging so important? The answer seems to be that it embodies all the consequences of the change from an "Old World" with its "hereditary wrongs" (p. 60) to a new era, free from those wrongs, but less admirable than the old order.

The narrator's views of the old world and the new are strewn throughout the novel, occurring particularly in what he calls "digressions" though they are obviously very important to an overall understanding of the story. For with all its wrongs, the old order had dashing heroes like Lord Nelson that the new order has not shown; it had beauty and grace in its ships like the Victory which cannot be found in the practical Monitor of the new order (p. 76). The point about Nelson is perhaps the most important, and Chapter 4 discusses it thoroughly. Nelson's act of standing in the middle of the battle in his full uniform, with its bright medals and gold braid, is considered folly and a tactical blunder by people of the new order, for it led to his death. And the narrator agrees that the new insistence on practicality (like the Benthamites with their "greatest good for the greatest number of people" goal) would properly condemn Nelson. On the other hand, the narrator argues, such an act is much more inspiring to the fighting men and not at all vainglorious.

Other shortcomings of the new order are also expressed. An important one, for example, would be the present view of Billy's death. The Surgeon, as an instance of the modern man, thought that Vere's decision to try Billy himself and not wait for the Admiral was a mistake, even though Billy appreciates the Captain's concern; the surgeon too cannot explain why Billy's body did not undergo the usual muscular spasms at death, for he rejects the more romantic "will-power" (supposedly on Billy's part) and "euthanasia." And the newspaper's account of the trial in Chapter 30 with its twisted facts indicates that a cold, objective view which the new order seems to strive for misses seeing the real truth of the situation. Instead of agreeing with the scientific view, the narrator seems to prefer the attitude of mystery and reverence by the common sailor expressed in the Ballad "Billy in the Darbies."

QUESTIONS:

*1. What kind of a character is Billy Budd? What incidents, for example, show his innocence of worldly ways?

*2. What kind of a man is Mr. Claggart? Why does he dislike Billy?

3. What kind of a man is Captain Vere? Where does he stand in relation to Billy and Claggart?

*4. To you, what does the conflict between Billy and Claggart seem to symbolize or represent?

*5. Do you agree with Captain Vere that Billy must hang for what he did? Why or why not?

6. List Captain Vere's reasons for his opinion? Are they valid?

*7. In the long argument over Billy's sentence, Captain Vere says that the problem is not a moral one, but a practical one (p. 130). Do you agree? Should the three officers of the court consider their moral scruples and the extenuating circumstances in sentencing Billy?

*8. How can the law and morality be two different things? Are laws necessarily moral?

*9. Why does the narrator spend such a long time talking about Captain Nelson and the Great Mutiny? Does the narrator seem to think that Billy should have hanged?

10. What is the significance of the ships' names: the Rights of Man; the Indomitable; the Athéiste?

11. Compare the retellings of the incident in the last two chapters. Why are they so dissimilar?

There are several ways to conclude this unit on literary values, though perhaps the best method would involve a discussion in class and a paper out of class, both on the place of values in literature. The questions which we may want the students to answer in discussion is this, how much is the reader of a piece of literature expected to accept the values expressed in that work.

This is an important problem for the student may have begun to see literature as some sort of propaganda after the concentrated study of values he has just made. The actual attitude the reader holds toward these values is very important then. One of the points which can be made is that the values which a literary work suggests cannot always be separated legitimately from the particularized dramatic situation in which they occur. Another is that the reader is by no means obligated to accept the values as his own, that he should, instead, give careful consideration to whether or not the values that applied in an imaginary world also apply in the "real world."

The paper which would conclude this unit should ask the student to discover by himself the values which a literary work suggests. Any poem or story in our books is usable here though the works listed below seem especially appropriate.

1. A long paper could be done on the play The Misanthrope by Moliere in which the student explores the problems faced by an idealistic reformer of a decadent society. In the end, neither wins.

2. The short story "A Bottle of Milk for Mother" (28 in Short Story Masterpieces) is narrated by a totally objective speaker; it is thus very difficult to tell what attitude he suggests we take. The student may have to work for some time before he realizes an amoral view is the best.

3. The short story, "The Nightingales Sing" by Elizabeth Parsons (p. 368) is about a woman caught between two worlds.

4. The short story, "Open Winter" by H. L. Davis, tells the story of a young man's acceptance of an old man's values.

5. The short story, "The Third Prize" by A. D. Coppard (p. 115) presents a man who cheats in a race and doesn't get caught.

6. A short paper can be written about any poem.

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OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

THE USE AND OVERUSE OF LITERARY CONVENTION

The PLACE of VALUES in LITERATURE

Literature Curriculum VI
Student Version

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The project reported herein was supported through the Cooperative Research Program of the Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

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THE USE AND OVERUSE OF CONVENTION

When we say that a piece of writing is "original," we usually feel that we are complimenting it. But it is also true that almost all writers are influenced by "conventions" developed in past literature. We might define a literary convention as any device which the author and audience agree has a particular meaning.

Symbols, for example, may be conventional if their meaning is a well-established custom, understood by most experienced readers. In "The Other Side of the Hedge," Forster uses the conventional symbols of a road for a way of life, of a dip in water for baptism, of the gates of ivory and horn for deluding and true dreams. Each genre has several conventions, or usual and agreed-upon characteristics. In Macbeth, Shakespeare uses such Greek tragic conventions as that prophecies come true and that the hero falls through his own character flaw. Also, here Shakespeare is writing about actual historical events instead of creating his own "original" plot.

Absurdist drama, such as Edward Albee's "Sandbox," read in the unit, Difficult Literature: A Reader's View, breaks the old convention that drama should be like real life. The characters symbolize something in life, but they may be like the Angel of Death, who could not really exist. Or they may do things which never really happen, such as dying on schedule, talking to the audience, or burying Grandma in the sand. Albee has something to say about real life, but he says it by breaking convention and putting unrealistic action on the stage.

So we can see that great literature need not be absolutely new, absolutely original. Yet of course there is no sense to writing a work if it does nothing more than recombine the old conventions. To be worthwhile, it must use its conventions to say something new. Forster, for example, is using the old Christian tradition of the narrow path to heaven, but he is using it to tell us to go off the path, to stop and enjoy life right away instead of plodding on to some far-off goal.

The purpose of this unit is to try to discover how new a piece of literature must be to be worthwhile. We want to find out what it is which makes one work "trite," another original, to ask ourselves how much a good writer may depend on the old. Of course, we will want to examine the basic ideas, the subjects, of the selections to determine whether they are new. But Forster's basic message that life should be enjoyed is not new; it is found even in the ancient Greeks. However, he takes a new look at the old message, using a new method of presentation to approach it. So we will also want to look at the ways these authors present their ideas, asking whether their language is fresh, whether their figures of speech are original, whether their plot is new or, as in Shakespeare, newly adapted to his message. We will need to see whether characters merely fit the old "types" or are the ever-different, complex figures of life. We will examine each work from all the aspects we have studied before, but this time we will examine it not only to understand the work but also to evaluate its originality.

I. Lyric Poetry.

Our problem is at its simplest here, since we don't have to worry about plot or characterization. You will need first to reach each piece carefully to grasp its main ideas, then to examine these ideas to determine whether they are traditional or are partially or wholly new. Then, since much worthwhile literature is made up of old ideas presented in a new way, you will want to examine various aspects of the presentation--the language used, the figures of speech, the form, many other such details. When you have analyzed the three groups of poems presented here, try to apply the principles you have learned to works not discussed in class, perhaps to those listed in the writing assignments at the end of the unit.

A. Trite Language.

Selections:

Wilfred Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth," Immortal Poems, (ed. Oscar Williams, Washington Square Press, New York, 1965), p. 553

Robinson Jeffers, "The Bloody Sire," Immortal Poems, p. 531

Edgar Guest, "Along the Paths o' Glory,"

(For text, see The Path to Home by Edgar A. Guest, The Reilly & Lee Co., Chicago, 1919, p. 61.)

These three poems present three quite different attitudes toward war. In each case, determine what this attitude is and decide whether it is traditional or original. Then ask yourself the following questions about presentation:

All three poems:

1. Does the poet tend to use "stock phrases," or groups of words frequently used together in poetry, such as "fleecy clouds" or "joy of youth"?

2. Does the poet use words which bring an automatic feeling with them, instead of making the reader think, such as "baby," "honesty," or "love"? (Such words are not, of course, always wrong, but they are wrong if they are used only to bring out the same old emotion, not to call forth either new thought or new feeling.)

Owen--What is the poet comparing throughout the poem? Is this basic metaphor conventional or original?

Jeffers--What is the effect of words such as "bark," "blasphemies," "terrible halo," "cruel and bloody," on the total attitude of the poem?

B. Over-Wording

Selections:

Stanzas from Wordsworth's "The Thorn" and "A Sailor's Mother"

John Milton, "On His Blindness," Immortal Poems, p. 106

Edgar Guest, "A Plea"

(For text, see Path to Home, ibid., p. 17.)

The same old thing can usually be said in the same old way with very few words. So if the author wishes to write a longer poem, what does he do with the rest of the space? He may fill it in with stock phrases, with repetition, with high-sounding language, with details or figures of speech which really add nothing to the statement of subject. All of this space could be used to individualize the ideas, to make them personal and meaningful.

You have below two versions of each of two stanzas from Wordsworth --an original one and a final, revised one, in which the same number of lines is used to say more. Try to determine which is the revised stanza and what it says which is not found in the original.

And they had fixed the wedding day,
The morning that must wed them both;
But Stephen to another Maid
Had sworn another oath;
And with this other Maid, to church
Unthinking Stephen went--
Poor Martha! on that woeful day
A cruel, cruel fire, they say
Into her bones was sent:
It dried her body like a cinder,
And almost turned her brain to tinder.

And they had fixed the wedding day,
The morning that must wed them both;
But Stephen to another Maid
Had sworn another oath;
And, with this other Maid, to church
Unthinking Stephen went--
Poor Martha! on that woeful day
A pang of pitiless dismay
Into her soul was sent;
A fire was kindled in her breast,
Which might not burn itself to rest.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

And, thus continuing, she said,
"I had a Son, who many a day
Sailed on the seas, but he is dead:
In Denmark he was cast away,
And I have travelled weary miles to see
If aught which he had owned might still remain for me."

And thus continuing, she said,
"I had a son, who many a day
Sailed on the sea; but he is dead:
In Denmark he was cast away;
And I have travelled far as Hull to see
What clothes he might have left, or other property."

A similar comparison can be made between Milton's "On His Blindness" and Guest's "A Plea," both of which are based on the religious concept that, to please God, one must contentedly do his duty on earth, however low that duty may be. The idea is, of course, old. But does either author succeed in individualizing it, in finding a new method of presentation?

C. Sentimentality.

Selections:

John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," Immortal Poems, p. 321.

James Whitcomb Riley, "Longfellow, 1807-1907"

(For text, see The Complete Poetical Works of James Whitcomb Riley, Garden City Publishing Co., Inc. New York, 1941, pp. 729-730.)

Matthew Arnold, "Shakespeare"

Others abide our question. Thou art free;
We ask and ask--Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honored, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at.--Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

We've all read the newspaper and magazine "human interest" stories which draw all the emotion they can from a situation such as a poor widow trying to support her children, a mean Scrooge reforming, or a child saving another from drowning. Each situation draws some honest feeling from us, but the "sentimental" writer attempts to put into it more emotion than it deserves--and therefore often completely fails to affect us.

The same thing can happen in imaginative literature. The writer sometimes takes a worn-out idea or situation and, instead of presenting it in a really new way, simply tries to draw greater feeling from it. This is what we call "sentimentality."

Here we have three poems which poets wrote in praise of other poets. About each, ask yourself:

1. Is the writer telling how the poet he praises affects himself, or how he affects all men? Which is the more honest position?
2. Does the poet who is the subject of the poem deserve such praise in the eyes of most readers? Could such compliments be honestly paid to any human writer?

II. Short Stories.

Selections:

John Steinbeck, "Flight," Short Story Masterpieces, pp. 454-474.

"Jim Bent, Deserter," anonymous, in Kempton, Short Stories for Study

You will probably find judging originality in short stories a little easier than in poems. Most of you are much more familiar with storied forms than non-storied forms, since you've seen many television shows and movies, and read a number of magazine stories. You all know that it's "trite" when a boy and girl fall in love at first sight, quickly overcome all obstacles, and "live happily ever after." This is the sort of plot in which the end is predictable from the first event, even if the couple obviously have the wrong characters to be able to get along for a week.

It's the sort of plot that brings groans and moans out of some audiences, yawns out of others. But obviously it also brings rapt attention and even tears of joy out of yet others. And there is nothing wrong with enjoying a trite plot, as long as you know that it's trite, know that it's not good literature, not a piece of writing with something worthwhile to say about the world.

So in one sense judgment will be a little easier now. But in another it will be more difficult, because you'll need to be watching for triteness not only in plot, but also in all the aspects we talked about under poetry--in trite or overworked language, in sentimental development of ideas. Obviously, then, careful reading and thinking will still be extremely necessary.

JIM BENT, DESERTER

Jim Bent, Captain in the United States Army, found himself in a precarious position. In short it was this. His close friend and comrade at West Point, had fallen violently in love with the Major's wife, and not only was it a very disgraceful proceeding, but his constant night visits, sometimes lasting most of the night, indicated that the matter must soon come to a head. Lieutenant Kane didn't mean to break up the Major's home, but he was passionately in love with the lady in question, and merely did not have the courage and the will power to control his passions.

Captain Bent thought the matter over, and after seeing that arguing with Kane did absolutely no good, he decided to go over and see Mrs. Lane, the Major's wife.

"This outrageous proceeding must stop," he said to Mrs. Lane as he entered the door.

"And who are you to dictate to me?"

"You know it is ruining Kane and, God knows, it is awful for your husband. If he should find out, he'd kill you! And by ginger he ought to know. It is the most shameless thing I've ever heard of for a woman of your age to make love to a boy, behind your husband's back. Why some day he will do something that can't be patched up! And who will be to blame? I tell you it must stop!"

"Will you kindly leave my house and mind your own business?" stormed Mrs. Lane, stamping her foot down on the floor.

"Not until you have promised that you won't see him again. He promised not to come over here tonight and he won't. But later he will if you allow him to, and you must not do that. Come now Mrs. Lane, can't you see how awful it is? It must be stopped!"

"As I've said before it is none of your business and what's more he is coming over tonight!"

"Then I will tell the Major!" Bent turned to walk out. His blow had struck home.

"Oh please Mr. Bent. Don't do that. He would kill me. Please," placing her arms around his neck, "please promise you won't--oh --oh--"

"So you damnable cur! You made me promise to stay home, so that you could have her yourself! By God I'll kill you for that!" Kane stood in the doorway, his eyes flashing and his lips quivering.

"Just wait a minute and let me explain old man, I was just--"

"Explain Hell! Come on, fight for your dirty life, or die like the coward you are!" Kane drew his gun. Bent jumped at him and seized his wrist. There was a great straining and pulling as the gun wavered, pointing first here--then there. Finally a loud report. Kane staggered back with a bullet in his shoulder.

"Get out of here. Get out," he yelled at Bent, who, seeing his friend only wounded, was glad to have a chance to see the sentinel and explain the shot as an accident.

"Darling," said Kane, after his assailant had left, "I thought you cared for no one else, but I suppose it was his fault, and he was forcing his attentions. There, there. My shoulder's all right. Just give me a kiss and it will be fine."

Thus it went on. Kane, completely overcome by Mrs. Lane's beauty, kept making love to her and showering her with kisses for many hours.

In the meanwhile, Bent, completely overcome by the accident, paced the floor of his own bungalow waiting for Kane's return. Longer and longer he waited until finally the door swung open and in came Mrs. Lane, confused, excited, and completely overcome by terror.

"Oh Mr. Bent, something terrible has happened! It is awful. He's dead. You killed him."

"What? Impossible! I only shot him in the shoulder. How could I--Oh God! Is he really dead?"

"He's dead! What shall I do? Oh, the disgrace to the poor boy! I can stand it, but to him, and his poor mother. Death oh yes, but then disgrace; it is awful!"

"You should have thought of that before you--,"

"But now. It is now we are thinking about. He's dead. You killed him. You must go away--"

"What, desert? NEVER!"

"But think of him. You killed him. Now the least you can do for him is to save his good name, and his mother! You can slip out and hide and no one will ever know why he was killed. But, can't you see Mr. Bent? It's the only honorable thing for you to do."

"I'll go. You don't deserve it. He does, poor boy, and so does his mother. But you--"

"How will I know when you are gone?"

"When you see these lights go out, I will have gone, and then you can report me. I only hope to heaven I'm shot by the sentinel."

She left him immediately and it was not long before he gathered a few necessary things together and slipped out into the night.

It was some time later in the slums of New York that Bent found himself at a table in a cheap saloon. He was there for no reason at all, except that he had nowhere else to go. He gazed around thoroughly disgusted with the place and everybody in it. Suddenly his eyes fell on a girl who looked rather more refined than anyone he had seen for a long while, and far more sad than even he felt. A brusk bar man came up and asked her for an order.

"A glass of water please," she said.

"What in H--do you think you 're doing in here lady? Taking my good time with water! Get-- Hey!"

Bent had seized him by the neck.

"You pusillanimous beast, get that water or--" he left the rest to the flushed bartender's imagination.

"I'm gittin' it. I'm gittin' it."

"Oh thank you so much sir, I really don't know what I would have done without your help. He was so horrid. Do sit down won't you? I don't care if you do drink, but I never did want to."

"I don't drink myself, but do tell me, why are you in here and what do you do? I'm really very curious, but it is such a relief to see someone who isn't so confoundedly cheap."

"I might ask you the same question," she laughed, "who are you?"

"Jim--er--Simmons," he replied, "and I'm really not doing anything. Just 'hoboing' you know."

"My, you seem like more than that. What a fine soldier you'd make!"

"Why do you say that?" he asked quickly.

"Oh you are so strong and brave, and you--er--don't seem too --er--busy."

"Well I'm not really too busy, but I don't know anything about the army and you see I really am not as brave as I look."

"Oh I know you are, but won't you take me home? I hate this awful place."

"Why certainly. I'm overjoyed to have the chance."

Bent rose from the table and walked out with his new acquaintance, far happier than he had been since his desertion, and for the first time was his mind light for at least a moment. It was some time later that Bent realized how much he cared for the girl, and how much he regretted the barrier than kept him from asking her to become his wife. He was in her apartments calling on her when his feelings came to the surface.

"Darling," he said, "I am not what you think I am, but a deserter from the United States Army."

"What? Why Jim! I knew you had been something that was worthwhile. You are far too intelligent to be a mere 'hobo,' but I never knew you were a deserter. Why don't you go back and suffer the punishment? Then we'll be free to be--er--," she stopped in great confusion.

"You know, I am crazy to marry you darling, but I can't go back. I simply can't."

"Jim, you must. Pay the penalty and then I'll marry you. I have a secret to tell you too. I'm in the Secret Service. I was told to find you and deliver you to the authorities, but it would be so much better if you would give yourself up!"

"Then all you have told me of your love was a lie? You were just trying to catch me? You don't care at all? You want me to give myself up?"

"Oh but I do care. Give yourself up, pay the penalty, and then we will be free to marry."

"A Hell of a lot of freedom I'll get after a murder charge."

"Murder! Oh God. And they're here after you. Run! Take the fire escape. They're at the door! Run! Quick!"

"I'll give myself up! Come in!"

"No! No! Your man isn't here. Don't come in."

"Come in, Jim Bent, deserter, is here."

It was the next morning. Jim Bent stood facing the Colonel.

"What have you to say, Sir?"

"Noth--."

The door burst open. Major Lane staggered in.

"I've done it. I've killed her."

"Who?"

"The animal that called herself my wife. It is she who has made me a criminal. I shot Kane. She made me keep quiet. She lied. I found her out. I killed her with these hands."

"Bent," said the Colonel a few moments later, "I've locked our little detective in my office. Are you going to leave her there?"

Study Questions

1. Different men will of course react differently to the idea of having killed another. Pepé kills a man; Bent thinks he does. According to the information the author has previously given you about him, which man acts most fully in accord with his character?
2. Both stories are in some respects about a self-sacrificing love, although the love is of very different kinds. Bent and "the girl" are each ready to give up a great deal for each other; Mama Torres, we come to feel, has devoted the whole of her life to her children. Compare the motivation of the love in each case; ask yourself if the authors give you better reasons for the love of Bent and the girl for each other or of Mama for her children.
3. Compare the probability of each story ending as it does.
4. The first paragraph in each case sets some sort of background for the story. Which tells you more about the type of story? Which more accurately foreshadows the kind of development and ending to be expected? Would you say that the action, what happens, is always the most important part of a story?
5. Each story has some indication of right and wrong. Does it seem right or wrong that Mrs. Lane attempts to hide her husband's guilt? That Mama attempts to hide Pepé from detection? In which story is the moral situation more complex? Which sort of situation seems to you to come closer to life?

III. Narrative Poetry.

Selection:

John Keats, "The Eve of St. Agnes," Immortal Poems, p. 333.

In the short story comparison, we concentrated primarily on aspects of plot; in the lyric poetry section, on characteristics of development in trite and original poetry. In narrative poetry, you will have to combine the two more carefully, thinking about how much originality the plot and characterization have and about whether the language in which they are stated is overly dependent on convention.

Since Keats often uses archaic terms which are unfamiliar to most of us, notes are included here to help you understand the poem. Don't forget that it is unfair to judge any work before you fully understand it. The notes are identified by the stanza number, followed by a dash and the line number within the stanza.

1-1 St. Agnes' Eve: St. Agnes was martyred as a very young girl after refusing to give up either her Christianity or her chastity. She became the patron saint of virgins; the lamb, mentioned in stanza eight, became the symbol of her innocence. A legend developed that on the eve of her feast day, January 21, maidens who performed certain rituals, such as going to bed without supper and not looking behind them as they prepared for bed, would dream of the men they were to marry.
1-5 beadsman: a man who prays for another, especially as a duty
1-7 censer: a container in which incense is burned
2-6 black, purgatorial rails: "rails" probably means the sculptured robes on the statues of the dead. These are "purgatorial" because the dead are held in purgatory.
2-7 dumb oratories: an oratory is a small chapel for prayer; this one is "dumb" because it is occupied by the sculptured figures of the dead.
5-1 argent: silver, shining
8-7 amort: like death
8-8 lambs unshorn: When lambs were brought to the altar as a sacrifice on St. Agnes' day, the wool was given to the nuns to be spun and woven.
10-3 citadel: fortress, stronghold
10-9 beldame: an old woman
12-6 gossip: godmother or elderly female friend; not a term of disrespect
14-3 witch's sieve: a sieve which witchcraft has made able to hold water
14-4 fays: fairies
17-9 beard: to oppose, defy
19-9 Since Merlin paid his demon: a reference to the end of Merlin, in which he is shut up in a tree.
20-2 cates: choice foods
20-3 tambour frame: drum-shaped embroidery frame
21-8 amain: exceedingly
21-9 ague: a fit of shaking, a chill
22-9 frayed: frightened
24-7 heraldries: coats of arms
24-9 scutcheon: a shield-shaped surface on which a coat of arms is shown
25-2 gules: the color red as used in heraldry
25-3 boon: favor
27-7 like a missal where swart Paynims pray: clasped shut, as a missal or prayer book, would be in a country of Paynims, or pagans
29-5 Morphean amulet: a charm belonging to Morpheus, the god of sleep
29-8 affray: frighten
30-5 soother: smoother, softer, more soothing
30-7 argosy: a large merchant ship or a fleet of such ships
30-8 Fez: a city in northern Morocco
30-9 Samarcand: a city in Asia, just north of Afghanistan
31-6 seraph: a member of the highest order of angels
31-7 eremite: hermit

32-5 salver: tray
33-4 In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans mercy": in Provence, a district in southern France, called "The beautiful lady without pity."
37-1 flaw-blown: a flaw is a sudden gust of wind
38-3 vermeil: vermilion, a brilliant scarlet red
40-7 arras: tapestry

Study Questions

1. Why do you think Keats included the first four and a half stanzas?

2. What do stanzas 6-8 and 22 tell about Madeline's character? Describe Porphyro's character after studying stanzas 9-19. Are they such that it seems likely that they would fall in love with one another? What does Porphyro intend to do in Madeline's chamber? When you have finished the poem, decide whether you think he has carried out these intentions.

3. Stanzas 24-26 are purely physical description. When you thoroughly understand the picture they present, reread them to decide what they suggest about Madeline's nature and about the atmosphere of the room.

4. What senses is Keats working on in stanzas 30-31?

5. What is the cause of all the horrors of the last line?

IV. Drama.

Selection:

Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, in *Six Great Modern Plays*, pp. 435-512.

You probably remember from your previous study of plays how difficult it is for a dramatist to show what goes on in the minds of his characters. And characters are often assumed to tell the truth about what they think when they talk in their sleep, when they are drunk, or when they are temporarily or permanently insane. Sometimes, too, their actions suggest their thoughts.

But Tennessee Williams had a special problem in writing *The Glass Menagerie*. He wanted to tell about the development of a young man's mind. If he had been writing a short story or a novel, he would probably have used the first person. But Williams is a dramatist. And he couldn't have the young man always soliloquizing, drunk, or insane. So he had to somehow change the conventions of the dramatic form so that he could show this character's thoughts without making him ridiculous.

As you read, watch for the original ways in which Williams handles the form. But don't forget to attend also to what he does with plot and language conventions--to how he uses them and to how he dispenses with them when they don't serve his purpose.

You should have little trouble understanding the action of the play, which is about ordinary people living ordinary lives in our own century. But two details might need explanation.

The historical setting is important to the play. On pp. 438-439, Tom tells us a little about the social background against which the play takes place. And on p. 466 he mentions the disturbances in Europe which would bring war, giving the bored young people all the excitement they could ask for. This was the late thirties, the era between the depression and the entrance of the U.S. into the war. Many people still felt insecure, economically and otherwise, as a result of the depression. Much unemployment remained, as shown in Laura's joblessness. And many also felt that the old American individualism was gone, since big business and big government seemingly took more and more power out of the hands of the common man.

One screen legend will be confusing to most of you. On pages 439 and 442, Williams quotes from Francois Villon, a fifteenth-century French poet, the line "Ou sont les neiges," or "Where are the snows." The complete line is "Ou sont les neiges d'antan," or "Where are the snows of last year," from the "Ballade des dames du temps jadis," or "Ballad of women of times of old." The line would remind many readers of the following stanza from Justin Huntly McCarthy's translation, "A Ballad of Dead Ladies,"

> Alas for lovers! Pair by pair
> The wind has blown them all away;
> The young and yare, the fond and fair;
> Where are the Snows of Yesterday?

Study Questions

1. Discuss the symbolic meaning of (a) glass (b) jonquils (c) the movies (d) the fire escape

2. Reread pp. 498-500, watching for Laura's and Jim's ways of looking at the unicorn and at the breaking of its horn. What do these attitudes show about the pair?

3. If you read The Mayor of Casterbridge last year, consider the ways in which Michael Henchard's tragedy is like Tom's.

4. Much of what Williams has to say is about problems of communication, particularly between generations. Consider whether the people in the following pairs can communicate their feelings; if so, why, and if not, why not:
   (a) Tom and Amanda
   (b) Tom and Laura
   (c) Laura and Amanda
   (d) Laura and Jim

5. Consider the effects of the stage directions, particularly the following:
   (a) Tom is dressed as a merchant sailor from the beginning
   (b) The prominence of the father's picture
   (c) Tom often motions for music and special lighting
   (d) Laura is often seen in a bright beam of white light

Writing Assignments:

1. Compare the originality of one of the following pairs of poems. After you have read the poems carefully, decide whether the message itself is trite or original. Also examine use of convention in such things as diction, figures of speech, and form. Watch for the sentimental, stock phrases, and for words used to bring stock responses.

   a. Hopkins, "Pied Beauty," Immortal Poems, p. 458.

   Edgar Guest, "The Common Joys":

   (For text, see The Path to Home by Edgar Guest, The Reilly & Lee Co., Chicago, 1919, pp. 171-172.)

   b. Julia Moore, "Minnie's Departure":

   (For text, see The Sweet Singer of Michigan, by Julia A. Moore, Pascal Covici, Publisher, Inc., Chicago, 1928, pp. 39-40.)

   John Crowe Ransom, "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter":

   (For text, see "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter" from Selected Poems. Revised edition. by John Crowe Ranson Knopf, New York, 1963.)

   c. A. E. Housman, "To an Athlete Dying Young," Immortal Poems, p. 486.

   Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "O Little Feet":

O little feet! That such long years
Must wander on through hopes and fears,
Must ache and bleed beneath your load;
I, nearer to the wayside inn
Where toil shall cease and rest begin,
Am weary, thinking of your road!

2. Revise the following stanza, replacing stock phrases with fresher, more original language:

> Oh! how well do I remember,
> The kind and loving words,
> And now as I sat dreaming,
> The thought my memory stirs.
> But the days have passed before me,
> And the scenes of long ago,
> But I can never forget the
> Days that have passed o'er.

3. Write an essay evaluating the originality and the use of literary conventions in one of the following short stories. Consider not only the plot and the ideas, but also the means of presentation, such features as language, characterization, sentimentalization, and use of coincidence or stock response.

   a. Conrad Aiken, "Impulse," Short Story Masterpieces, pp. 15-28.

   b. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Winter Dreams," Short Story Masterpieces, pp. 182-207.

4. Expand the following rather trite plot into a short story which is original in its means of presentation. Remember that even the best writers use literary conventions, such as the symbolism of winter for old age and death, or of a rainbow for hope. But good writers use these conventions subtly, as tools for their own ideas.

   Dr. John Taylor stops at a coffee shop on his way home from a late night call. A girl in the next booth faints. He diagnoses her illness, gets the necessary medication from an all-night pharmacy, and takes her home after a conversation which indicates that they may be starting to fall in love.

THE PLACE OF VALUES IN LITERATURE

STUDENT VERSION

How familiar are you with the following scene?

> His ruggedly-handsome face tanned by the summer sun, Sheriff Clayborn, tall, hard, and lean, stood calmly facing the man just a few steps away on the board sidewalk. The other man was nervous, and his black hat was darker in spots where the sweat had soaked through. Jake Cain was known throughout west Texas as a small-time gunnman, willing to drive out any homesteader for the proper fee from a cattleman, and then quietly to drive out a few of the boss's cattle with him when he headed for other territory.
>
> "Cain, be out of town by sundown" were the only words spoken by the sheriff.

Reading that you probably say, "That's the oldest convention in literature--the good guy against the bad guy." And of course you are right; it is an old familiar story. But what is the author trying to do in such a passage?

The first answer to that question would be that he is trying to tell an exciting story. And that is perhaps the primary purpose of most stories: to relate an entertaining narrative. But also involved in the brief incident above is the expression of certain values and attitudes. Why, for example, would we so automatically call Jake Cain a bad guy? Because his petty crimes and sweaty black hat tell us clearly that he is outside the law, which to most readers is "bad." There are other attitudes apparent in this passage, too; for instance, the "tall, hard, and lean" body of the sheriff is considered more admirable than the nervous, sweating Cain.

In all the poems and stories which follow, you will find that the speaker is expressing certain values and attitudes like the ones above. As you look for these values, you will want to ask yourself several questions about each work: Which things does the author approve of and which does he dislike? What are his reasons for his evaluations and are they legitimate ones? Does he think there is any possible argument against his ideas, and if so, how does he reveal and then counter his opposition?

The word "values" may be a little unclear here. By that term, a good many things can be meant, for men value many different things. There are, for instance, objects which men value in an aesthetic manner, that is, for the beauty and the pleasure they afford, such as music or art. Then, too, there are ideas which men value in an ethical or moral situation, a situation involving the rightness or wrongness of conduct. Expression of ethical values occurs very frequently in literature, simply because the author is interested in exploring all the aspects of men's relations with other men. Thus you will find that the work of literature also often deals with the various modes of conduct man has established for himself, such as rules or laws or religious tenets. Still another kind of values are the practical, when, for instance, men may prefer a certain method of doing something because it gets the job done faster. All of these kinds of values and perhaps other are expressed in the works which follow.

But you will be concerned not with just which values a particular work of literature suggests. You will also want to discover the reasons why those values are preferred. These reasons, of course, will be inextricably tied up with the particular dramatic situation of the poem or story. You will therefore have to analyze very carefully the actions of the characters, the outcome of the plot, and the language the author uses so that you can determine exactly why these values are held. Once you have determined the reasons for a value, you will also be able to decide whether the work of literature has sufficiently convinced you of the importance of that value. For example, in the western scene involving Sheriff Clayborn, the reasons given for calling the sheriff "the good guy" are not sufficient; a moral nature does not necessarily depend on a dark tan, a strong body, and a calm voice. We would have to read further to see whether the sheriff really deserves the evaluation we so quickly gave him.

I. The Assumption of Values in Literature

1. The first poem you are asked to read is "The Lamb" by William Blake, p. 226 in Immortal Poems. It was originally published in a book entitled Songs of Innocence in 1789, so as you read it, consider whether the poem fits the title of the book.

1. What is the speaker's attitude toward the lamb and the life the lamb leads?

2. Who is the creator of the lamb, accoring to the speaker? Does his character match that implied by the first stanza?

3. Who is the narrator of the poem? Does this knowledge affect your opinion of what the speaker says? Why or why not?

2. "Crossing the Bar" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, p. 397 in Immortal Poems, is a poem about a considerably different subject than Blake's "The Lamb." At Tennyson's request, this poem is always printed last in any edition or selection of his poems, as it is here. Why do you suppose Tennyson made this request?

1. What is the subject of this poem? What things in the first two stanzas suggest this topic?

2. Compare the first two stanzas as a unit with the last two stanzas. How are they similar? In what general way are they different?

3. What does "our bourne of Time and Place" mean? What is the speaker assuming about his soul?

4. What seems to be the speaker's main point about death? What things has he assumed in order to believe this?

3. "Say Not The Struggle" by Arthur Hugh Clough, p. 426 in Immortal Poems, is another Victorian poem like Tennyson's. As you read it, compare it with Blake's and Tennyson's as to the way it expresses values. Is Clough more direct in his efforts to convince the reader of his values than either of the other poets?

1. To whom is the poem addressed? What things has this person said which the speaker disagrees with? What is the speaker's main point?

2. What sort of argument is being advanced in line 5? Does the rest of stanza two support this contention?

3. What seems to be the purpose of stanzas three and four? How are they related to the argument of the poem?

4. Do you think the speaker has sufficiently established his point? What are the strong and the weak points of his argument?

5. In what ways are the first three poems in this unit alike? That is, what do all three poems have in common with respect to the values they are expressing?

4. "The World" by Henry Vaughan, p. 145 in Immortal Poems, is the first of three poems which take a considerably different approach to values than the three poems first read. So as you read them, try to determine in what basic way Vaughan and Wordsworth and Hood differ in their attitudes toward life from Blake, Tennyson, and Clough. This particular poem

speaks of having a vision of Eternity, but the universe that it pictures is not the universe we know today. For "The World" is a seventeenth century poem, written before the modern concept of a sun-centered solar system was generally accepted. Thus, as you read, try to picture the universe being described. Does the neat order of that universe perhaps have anything to do with the faith the speaker has in his religion?

1. Make a list of the values assumed by the speaker of this poem. To what religious faith does he obviously belong? How much does his faith seem to affect his opinion of other people?

2. Compare and contrast the speaker's views of eternity and the world. Which does he prefer, and how do you know?

3. What four particular sins does the speaker criticize in man? Why do you think he selected these four kinds of people? Why does he devote a whole stanza to the "darksome statesman"?

4. In stanza four, what happens to the ring image that was first used in stanza one? What other significant images are used to compare life in eternity with life in time?

5. "The World Is Too Much With Us" by William Wordsworth, p. 260 in Immortal Poems, is another poem like Vaughan's which criticizes the world we live in. But it has different reasons for criticizing the world, and as you read, compare the aspects of the world which are attacked with those attacked by Vaughan. This poem is also similar to Vaughan's in that it offers an alternative to life in the world. What is that alternative?

1. What does the phrase "The world is too much with us" mean? What does the speaker seem to mean by "the world"?

2. With what does the speaker compare the world? Which of the two kinds of life does he prefer?

3. What seems to be the proper relationship between man and Nature implied in this poem? Can it be achieved? How?

6. "The Song of the Shirt" by Thomas Hood is printed below. It too is a poem of social protest, but it differs in one important way from Vaughan and Wordsworth. It offers no alternative to the conditions pictured. But does that mean that the conditions under which the woman works and lives cannot or should no be changed? This poem was first published in the British humor magazine, Punch, in 1843 and became immediately popular;

it was supposedly written after Hood read an account of the poverty. stricken lives of workers in the London newspaper, the Times. Judging from the poem he wrote, what do you think was Hood's opinion of English social conditions?

"The Song of the Shirt"

by Thomas Hood

(For text, see The Literature of England; eds. Woods, Watt, Anderson, Volume II, Scott, Foresman and Co., Copyright 1936, pp. 293-294.)

1. What is the effect of having the woman present most of her own story in this poem?

2. Why do you suppose there is so much repetition of certain words and lines? What other parts of the poem give the impression of the woman working while she sings?

3. Is there any remedy for her situation? Would an hour in nature be sufficient? Why do you suppose that Hood, unlike Vaughan and Wordsworth, offers no alternative?

7. The short story, "Three Arshins of Land/or How Much Land Does a Man Need" by Leo Tolstoi, a Russian author, is printed below. You will probably recognize its form as that of a fable, which you studied in the eighth grade. What are the characteristics of a fable, and why is it a particularly appropriate form for making a point about values? As you read this story, ask yourself in what way the expression of values here

is similar to that in the poems you have just read. Also important, of course, is what way the story differs from the poems.

"Three Arshins of Land"
or
"How Much Land Does a Man Need?"

by Leo N. Tolstoi

A woman came from the city, to visit her younger sister in the country. The elder was a city merchant's wife; the younger, a country mujik's. The two sisters drank tea together and talked. The older sister began to boast--to praise up her life in the city; how she lived roomily and elegantly, and went out, and how she dressed her children and what rich things she had to eat and drink, and how she went to drive, and to walk, and to the theater.

The younger sister felt affronted, and began to deprecate the life of the merchant, and to set forth the advantages of her own,--that of the peasant.

"I wouldn't exchange my life for yours," says she. "Granted that we live coarsely, still we don't know what fear is. You live more elegantly; but you have to sell a great deal, else you find yourselves entirely sold. And the proverb runs, 'Loss is Gain's bigger brother.' It also happens, today you're rich, but tomorrow you're a beggar. But our mujiks' affairs are more reliable; the mujik's life is meager, but long; we may not be rich, but we have enough."

The elder sister began to say:

"Enough,--I should think so! So do pigs and calves! No fine dresses, no good society. How your goodman works! How you live in the dunghill, And so you will die and it will be the same thing with your children."

"Indeed," said the younger, "our affairs are all right. We live well. We truckle to no one, we stand in fear of no one. But you in the city all live in the midst of temptations; today it's all right; but tomorrow up comes some improper person, I fear, to tempt you, and tempts your khozyáin either to cards, or to wine, or to women. And everything goes to ruin. Isn't it so?"

Pakhom, the "goodman," was listening on the oven, as the women discussed.

"That's true," says he, "the veritable truth. As we peasants from childhood turn up mother earth, so folly stays in our head, and does not depart. Our one trouble is,--so little land. If I only had so much land as I wanted, I shouldn't be afraid of any one--even of the Devil."

The women drank up their tea, talked some more about dresses, put away the dishes, and went to bed.

But the Devil was sitting behind the oven; he heard everything. He was delighted because the peasant woman had induced her husband to boast with her; he had boasted that, if he had land enought, the Devil could not get him!

"All right," he thinks; "you and I'll have to fight it out. I will give you a lot of land. I'll get you through the land."

Pakhom's neighbor was a lady who owned a little estate. She had one hundred and twenty dessyatins.* For a long time she had never harmed the peasants in any way, living in peace with them. But lately she had installed a retired soldier as superintendent, and he worried the peasants with fines. No matter how careful Pakhom was, a horse would invade his neighbor's oat-field, or his cow would stray into her garden or the calves into the pasture. There was a fine for everything.

Pakhom paid, growled, beat his family, and in the course of the summer laid up much sin upon his soul because of the superintendent. He found relief only by keeping his cattle in the yard. He begrudged the fodder, but he was thus spared much anxiety.

In the winter the rumor spread that his neighbor meant to dispose of her land and that the superintendent thought of buying it. When the peasants heard this they were greatly troubled.

If the superintendent becomes the master, they judged, there will be no end to the fines.

They importuned the lady to sell the land to the community and not to the superintendent. As they promised to pay her more than the latter, she agreed. The peasants held a meeting, then met again, but came to no understanding. The Devil sowed dissensions. Finally they decided that each should buy land according to his means, and the owner consented again.

When Pakhom heard that a neighboring peasant had bought twenty dessyatins of the land, with time extension to pay one-half of the purchase price, he became envious. "They'll sell the whole land, and I'll go empty-handed." He consulted with his wife. "The peasants are buying land. We must get ten dessyatins," he said. They considered how to arrange the matter.

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*A dessyatin is about 2.7 acres.

They had saved a hundred rubles. They sold a foal, one-half of their beehives, hired the son out as a laborer, and thus succeeded in scraping one-half of the money together.

Pakhom looked over a tract of land of fifteen desyattins, with a grove, and negotiated with his neighbor. He contracted for the fifteen dessyatins and paid his earnest money. Then they drove to the city and made out the deed. He paid one-half of the money and agreed to pay the rest in two years. Pakhom now had land.

He borrowed money from his brother-in-law, bought seed and sowed the purchased land. Everything came up beautifully. Inside of a year he was able to pay off his debts to the neighbor and to his brother-in-law. Pakhom was now a landowner in his own right. He cultivated his own ground, and cut his own pasturage. He was overjoyed. The grass had another look; different kinds of flowers seemed to bloom on it. Once upon a time this land had looked to him the same as any other, but now it was a specially blessed piece of God's earth.

Pakhom was enjoying life. Everything would be well now if the peasants only left his fields alone, if they did not let their cattle graze on his meadows. He admonished them in a friendly fashion. But they did not desist from driving their cows on his land, and at night the strangers' horses invaded his grain. Pakhom chased them and for a time did not lay it up against the peasants. Finally, however, he lost patience and made a complaint to the court. He knew very well, tho, that necessity forced the peasants to do this, not love of wrongdoing. Still, he thought, he would have to teach them a lesson, or they would graze his land bare. A good lesson might be useful.

With the help of the court he taught them more than one lesson; more than one peasant was fined. And so it happened that the peasants were in no amiable mood towards him and were eager to play tricks on him. He was soon at loggerheads with all his neighbors. He land had grown, but the confines of the community seemed all too narrow now.

One day, as he was seated at home, a traveling peasant asked for a lodging. Pakhom kept him over night, gave him plenty of meat and drink, inquired where he came from and talked of this and that. The peasant related that he was on the way from the lower Volga region, where he had been working. Many peasants had settled there. They were received into the community and ten dessyatins were allotted to each. Beautiful land! It made the heart feel glad to see it full of sheaves. A peasant had come there naked and poor, with empty hands, and now he had fifty dessyatins under wheat. Last year he sold his one crop of wheat for five thousand rubles.

Pakhom listened with delight. He thought: why plague oneself in this crowded section, if one can live fine elsewhere? I will sell my land and property and from the proceeds I will buy land on the lower Volga and start a farm. Here in this crowded corner there is nothing but quarreling. I will go and look things over for myself.

When summer came he started on his journey. He went by boat to Samara on the Volga, then four hundred versts* on foot. When he arrived at his journey's end he found things even as they had been reported to him. Ten dessyatins were allotted to each person, and the mujiks were glad to receive the stranger into the community. If a man brought money with him he was welcome and could buy as much land as he pleased. Three rubles a dessyatin was the price for the best land.

When Pakhom had investigated everything, he returned home, sold his land at a profit, sold his homestead and cattle, took leave from his community, and, when the spring came around, he journeyed with his family to the new lands.

When he reached his destination with his family, Pakhom settled in a large village and registered in the community. Having treated the elders, he received his papers in good order. He had been taken into the community, and, in addition to the pasturage, land for five souls--fifty dessyatins in all--were allotted to him. He built a homestead and bought cattle. His allotment was twice as large as his former holdings. And what fertile land! He had enough of everything and could keep as many head of cattle as he wished.

In the beginning, while he was building and equipping his homestead, he was well satisfied. But after he had lived there a while he began to feel that the new lands were too narrow. The first year Pakhom sowed wheat on his allotted land. It came up bountifully, and this created a desire to have more land at his disposal. He drove over to the merchant and leased some land for a year. The seed yielded a plentiful harvest. Unfortunately the fields were quite far from the village and the gathered grain had to be carted for a distance of fifteen versts. He saw peasant traders in the neighborhood owning dairies and amassing wealth. How much better were it, thought Pakhom, to buy land instead of leasing it, and to start dairying. That would give me a well-rounded property, all in one hand.

Then he came across a peasant who owned five hundred dessyatins of land, but found himself ruined and was eager to dispose of his property at a low figure. They closed a deal. Pakhom was to pay fifteen hundred rubles, one-half down, one-half later.

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*A verst is approximately seven-tenths of a mile.

About this time a traveling merchant stopped at Pakhom's farm to feed his horses. They drank tea and spoke of this and that. The merchant told him that he was on his way home from the land of the Bashkirs. He had bought land there, about five thousand dessyatins, and had paid one thousand rubles for it. Pakhom made inquiries. The merchant willingly gave information.

"Only one thing is needful," he explained, "and that is to do some favor to their chief. I distributed raiment and rugs among them, which cost me a hundred rubles, and I divided a chest of tea between them, and whoever wanted it had his fill of vodka. I got the dessyatin land for twenty copeks. Here is the deed. The land along the river and even on the steppes is wheat-growing land."

Pakhom made further inquiries.

"You couldn't walk the land through in a year," reported the merchant. "All this is Bashkir-land. The men are as simple as sheep; one could buy from them almost for nothing."

And Pakhom thought: "Why should I buy for my thousand rubles five hundred dessyatins of land and hang a debt around my neck, while for the same amount I can acquire immeasurable property."

Pakhom inquired the way to the land of the Bashkirs. As soon as he had seen the merchant off, he made ready for the journey. He left the land and the homestead in his wife's charge and took only one of his farmhands along. In a neighboring city they bought a chest of tea, other presents, and some vodka, as the merchant had instructed them.

They rode and rode. They covered five hundred versts and on the seventh day they came into the land of the Bashkirs and found everything just as the merchant had described. On the riverside and in the steppes the Bashkirs live in kibitkas. They do not plow. They eat no bread. Cows and horses graze on the steppes. Foals are tied behind the tents, and mares are taken to them twice daily. They make kumyss out of mare's milk, and the women shake the kumyss to make cheese. The men drink kumyss and tea, eat mutton, and play the flute all day long. They are all fat and merry, and idle the whole summer through. Ignorant folk, they cannot speak Russian, but they were very friendly.

When they caught sight of Pakhom, the Bashkirs left their tents and surrounded him. An interpreter was at hand, whom Pakhom informed that he had come to buy land. The Bashkirs showed their joy and led Pakhom into their good tent. They bade him sit down on a fine rug, propped him up with downy cushions and treated him to tea and kumyss. They also slaughtered a sheep and offered him meat. Pakhom fetched from his tarantass the chest of tea and other presents and distributed them among the Bashkirs. The Bashkirs were overjoyed. They talked and talked among themselves and finally they ordered the interpreter to speak.

"They want me to tell you," said the interpreter, "that they have taken a liking to you. It is our custom to favor the guest in all possible ways and to return gifts for gifts. You have given us presents, now tell us what do you like of what we have so that we may give you presents also."

"Most of all I like land," replied Pakhom. "We're crowded where I am at home and everything is already under the plow. But you have good land and plenty of it. In all my born days I have never seen land like yours."

The Bashkirs were now talking again, and all at once it looked as though they were quarreling. Pakhom asked why they were quarreling. The interpreter replied:

"Some of them think that the chief should be consulted, and that no agreement ought to be made without him; but the others say it can be done without the chief just as well."

While the Bashkirs were yet arguing, a man with a hat of fox fur enterec the tent. Everybody stopped talking and they all rose.

"This is the chief."

Pakhom immediately produced the best sleeping robe and five pounds of tea. The chief accepted the presents and sat down in the place of honor. The Bashkirs spoke to him. He listened, smiled and addressed Pakhom in Russian.

"Well," he said, "that can be done. Help yourself, wherever it suits you. There is plenty of land."

"How can I do this, tho," thought Pakhom. "Some official confirmation is necessary. Otherwise they say today, help yourself, but afterwards they may take it away again." And he said:

"Thank you for these good words. You have plenty of land, and I need but little. Only I must know what land belongs to me. It must be measured and I need some sort of a confirmation. For God's will rules over life and death. You are good people and you give me the land; but it may happen that your children will take it away again."

The chief laughed. "Surely this can be done," he agreed. "A confirmation so strong that it cannot be make stronger."

Pakhom replied: "I heard that a merchant had been here among you. You sold him land and gave him a deed. I should like to have it the same way."

The chief immediately understood. "This too can be done," he exclaimed. "We have a writer. We will drive to the city and have the seals put on."

"We have but one price: one thousand rubles a day."

Pakhom failed to comprehend what sort of measure a day would be. "how many dessyatins will that make?"

"That we cannot figure out. For one day we sell you as much land as you can walk around in one day. The price of one day is one thousand rubles."

Pakhom looked surprised. "One can walk around a lot of land in one day," he said.

The chief smiled. "Everything will be yours, but on one condition. If in the course of the day you do not return to the place you start from, your money is lost."

"But how can it be noted how far I have gone?"

"We will stay right at the starting point. Our lads will ride behind you. Where you command they will drive in a stake. Then we shall mark furrows from stake to stake. Choose your circle to suit yourself, only before sunset be back at the spot where you started from. All the land that you walk around shall be yours."

Pakhom assented. It was decided to start early in the morning. They conversed for a while, drank kumyss and tea and ate more mutton. When the night set in Pakhom retired to sleep and the Bashkirs dispersed. In the morning they were to meet again in order to journey to the starting point.

Pakhom could not fall asleep. He had his mind on the land. What manner of things he thought of introducing there! "A whole prinicipality I have before me! I can easily make fifty versts in one day. The days are long now. Fifty versts encompass ten thousand dessyatins. I will have to knuckle down to no one. I'll plow as much as may suit me; the rest I'll use for a pasturage."

The whole night through he was unable to close his eyes; only towards morning he dozed restlessly. Hardly had he begun to doze when he saw a vision. He was lying in his kibitka and heard laughter outside. To see who it was that laughed he stepped out of the kibitka and found the chief of the Bashkirs. He was holding his hands to his sides and fairly shaking with laughter. Pakhom approached him in his dream to find out why he was laughing, but now, instead of the Bashkir, he saw the merchant who had come to his farm and told him of this land. Just as he wanted to ask him how long he had been there, he saw that it was no longer the merchant but that mujik who had called on him at his old homestead and told him of the lower Volga region. And now again it was no longer the mujik but the Devil himself, with horns and hoofs, and he laughed and stared at one spot. What is he looking upon? wondered Pakhom; why is he laughing? In his dream he saw a man lying outstretched, barefoot, clad only in a shirt and a pair of trousers, with his face turned upward, white as a sheet. As he looked again to see what manner of man it was, he saw clearly that it was he himself.

He awoke with the horror of it. What dreadful things one sees in a dream! He looked about. It was commencing to dawn. The people must be roused. It was time to journey to the starting place.

Pakhom arose, waked his servant, who had been sleeping in the tarantass, harnessed the horses and went to wake the Bashkirs.

"It is time," he said, "to travel to the steppe."

The Bashkirs got up, assembled, and the chief came among them. Again they drank tea and wanted to treat Pakhom, but he urged them to be off.

"If we go, let it be done at once," he remarked. "It is high time."

The Bashkirs made ready, some of them on horseback, others in tarantasses. Pakhom, accompanied by his servant, drove in his own cart. They came to the steppe as the morning sun was beginning to crimson the sky, and driving over to a little hillock they gathered together. The chief came towards Pakhom and pointed with his hand to the steppes.

"All this land that you see," he said, "as far as your eye can reach, is ours. Choose to suit yourself."

Pakhom's eyes shone. In the distance he saw grass land, smooth as the palm of his hand, black as poppy seeds. In the deeper places the grass was growing shoulder high.

The chief took his fur cap and placed it in the middle of the hill.

"This is the landmark. Here place your gold. Your servant will stay here. Go from this point hence and come back again. All the land which you encompass walking is yours."

Pakhom took out the money and laid it on the cap. He took off his coat, keeping the vest on, took a bag of bread, tied a flat water bottle to his belt, pulled up his top boots and made ready to go. He hesitated for a while which direction to take. The view was everywhere enchanting. Finally he said to himself: "I'll go towards the rising of the sun." He faced the East and stretched himself waiting for the sun to appear above the horizon. There was no time to lose. It is better walking in the cool of the morning. The riders took up their positions behind him. As soon as the sun was visible, he set off, followed by the men on horseback.

He walked neither briskly nor slowly. He had walked about a verst without stopping when he ordered a stake to be driven in. Once again in motion, he hastened his steps and soon ordered another stake to be put in. He looked back; the hill was still to be seen with the people on it. Looking up at the sun he figured that he had walked about five versts. It had grown warm, so he doffed his vest. Five versts further the heat began to trouble him. Another glance at the sun showed him it was time for breakfast. "I have already covered a good stretch," he thought. "Of course, there are four of these to be covered today; still it is too early to turn yet; but I'll take my boots off." He sat down, took off his boots and went on. The walking was now easier. "I can go five versts more," he thought, "and then turn to the left." The further he went, the more beautiful the land grew. He walked straight ahead. As he looked again, the hill was hardly to be seen, and the people on it looked like ants.

"Now it's time to turn back," he thought. "How hot I am! I feel like having a drink." He took his bottle with water and drank while walking. Then he made them drive in another stake and turned to the left. He walked and walked; the grass was high, the sun beat down with ever-growing fierceness. Weariness now set in. A glance at the sun showed him that it was midday. "I must rest," he thought. He stopped and ate a little bread. "If I sit down to eat, I'll fall asleep." He stood for a while, caught his breath and walked on. For a time it was easy. The food had refreshed him and given him new strength. But it was too oppressively hot, and sleep threatened to overcome him. He felt exhausted. "Well," he thought, "an hour of pain for an age of joy."

In this second direction he walked nearly ten versts. He meant then to turn to the left, but lo! the section was so fine--a luxuriant dale. Pity to give it up! What a wonderful place for flax! And again he walked straight on, appropriated the dale and marked the place with a stake. Now only he made his second turning. Casting his glance at the starting point he could hardly discern any people on the hill. "Must be about fifteen versts away. I have made the two sides too long and I must shorten the third. Though the property will turn out irregular in this way, what else can be done? I must turn in and walk straight toward the hill. I must hasten and guard against useless turns. I have plenty of land now." And he turned and walked straight toward the hill.

Pakhom's feet ached. He had worked them almost to a standstill. His knees were giving away. He felt like taking a rest, but he dared not. He had no time; he must be back before sunset. The sun does not wait. He ran on as though someone were driving him.

"Did I not make a mistake? Did I not try to grab too much? If I only get back in time! It is so far off, and I am all played out. If only all my trouble and labor be not in vain! I must exert myself to the utmost."

He shivered and ran onward in a trot. His feet were bleeding now. Still he ran. He cast off his vest, the boots, the bottle, the cap. "I was too greedy! I have ruined all! I can't get back by sunset!"

It was getting worse all the time. Fear shortened his breath. He ran on. The shirt and trousers were sticking to his body, his mouth was all dried out, his bosom was heaving like the bellows in a forge, his heart was beating like a hammer, the knees felt as though they were another's and gave under him.

He hardly thought of the land now; he merely thought what to do so as not to die from exertion. Yes, he feared to die, but he could not stop. "I have run so much that if I stop now they will call me a fool."

The Bashkirs, he could hear clearly, were screaming and calling. Thei noise added fuel to his burning heart. With the last effort of his strength he ran. The sun was close to the horizon, but the hill was quite near now. The bashkirs were beckoning, calling. He saw the fur cap, saw his money in it, saw the chief squatting on the ground with his hands at his stomach. He remembered his dream. "Earth there is a-plenty." he thought, "but will God let me live thereon? Ah, I have destroyed myself." And still he kept on running.

He looked at the sun. It was large and crimson, touching the earth and beginning to sink. He reached the foot of the hill. The sun had gone down. A cry of woe escaped from his lips. He thought all was lost. But he remembered that the sun must yet be visible from a higher spot. He rushed up the hill. There was the cap. He stumbled and fell, but reached the cap with his hands. "Good lad!" exclaimed the chief. "You have gained much land."

As Pakhom's servant rushed to his side and tried to lift him, blood was flowing from his mouth. He was dead.

The servant lamented.

The chief was still squatting on the ground, and now he began laughing loudly and holding his sides. Then he rose to his feet, threw a spade to the servant and said, "Here, dig!"

The Bashkirs all clambered to their feet and drove away. The servant remained alone with the corpse.

He dug a grave for Pakhom, the measure of his body from head to foot--three arshins* and no more. There he buried Pakhom.

# # # #

1. Why do you think the story opens with an argument between the two women over the virtues of city vs. country life? How is it related to the main point of the story about greed destroying itself?

2. How well does the proverb "Loss is Gain's bigger brother" describe the story's outcome?

3. Should we take the Devil literally here? Could the force that drives Pakhom from place to place be called the devil in him? What part does the Devil really play in Pakhom's moves?

4. Why do you think the narrator reveals the end of the story in Pakhom's dream before he begins his walk? Does this change our relationship with Pakhom to any extent?

5. How much land does a man need?

II. Conflicting Values in Literature

You now come to a considerably different approach to values in literature than the one we have seen in all the preceding works. Instead of assuming that the values which the narrator upholds are without question the right ones, the following poems and stories show that the question of values is always debatable. In these works, you will find several value systems in conflict, so you will have to discover more than one view of any event. Then, perhaps, you will also find that one view is preferred at the end, so you will ask why that evaluation is better than the others.

8. "O Yet We Trust" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, p. 391 in Immortal Poems, is the first of four works about religious doubt. This problem, of course, has always been one of man's major concerns, and each of these poems is considered an important statement of doubt. Tennyson's

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*An arshin is about two feet.

poem was first printed in his longer work entitled *In Memoriam*, which is an elegy for his dead young friend, A. H. Hallam. Because the speaker has been wondering why such a good and promising man died so young in life, he has gradually come to question his previous attitudes toward life and God. This poem expresses his most complete doubt. Later in the elegy, however, the speaker finds his faith again.

1. What is the position of the speaker at the beginning of the poem? Does this change as the poem progresses?

2. What is the difference between *knowing* and *trusting* in this poem?

3. Why does the question "but what am I?" change the speaker's mind? Is the believer as important as that which is believed in?

4. How well do you think the image of the infant in the last stanza expresses the speaker's spiritual state?

9. "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, p. 428 in *Immortal Poems*, is another Victorian expression of doubt, so you will want to compare it with "O Yet We Trust." Here, however, the speaker is part of a specific dramatic scene; because of this, are we more convinced by the speaker's expression of values than we are by Tennyson's poem?

1. What is the spiritual position of the speaker at the beginning of this poem? At the end? What does the end say about his vision at the beginning?

2. Why does the speaker hear the sound of the pebbles only after he calls his love to the window? What do the pebbles seem to represent to him?

3. Why is Sophocles mentioned? What is his relation to the speaker?

4. What does the speaker mean by the "sea of Faith"?

10. "The Darkling Thrush" by Thomas Hardy, p. 451 in *Immortal Poems*, is a third poem about doubt. It is usually dated December, 1900. All of these poems were written during Queen Victoria's reign; why do you suppose there was a wide-spread feeling of doubt in that period?

1. How much do you think the speaker's frame of mind corresponds with the mood suggested by the landscape at the beginning of the poem?

2. What do the many allusions to death seem to refer to? Is the change of century that significant?

3. Is the speaker at all moved by the thrush's song? Does he change his original attitude?

4. Compare this poem with Tennyson's and Arnold's. How are they alike in expressing doubt? How different?

11. "The Saint" by V.S. Pritchett, beginning on p. 27 of 50 Great Short Stories, is another work about faith. This story deals with a modern teenager, however, and you will perhaps understand his problems better than you did those of the speakers in the poems. You will find outlined in this story the tenets of a particular faith (imaginary, of course); do the particular beliefs which the boy eventually loses faith in really make that much difference in what the story is trying to say? Also as you read you will want to consider the differences between this story's loss of faith in a particular religion and the poems' loss of faith in religion, the world, and man in general. Does that make the story less applicable to any one reader?

1. Describe the tenets of the Church of the Last Purification. What presupposition are they based upon? Is the question of the origin of evil really central to most religious faiths?

2. What does the ape represent? Why does it follow the boy around?

3. Why should Mr. Timberlake's accident cause the boy's loss of faith? Why do you suppose the boy prays Mr. Timberlake will not walk on the water?

4. Why does the boy call Mr. Timberlake a saint after he gets covered with the buttercup pollen? In what sense is he saintly?

5. What does our discovery at the end that Mr. Timberlake was trying to avoid a heart attack do to our opinion of his religiosity? In what sense has the ape been eating out his heart?

12. "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost, p. 504 in Immortal Poems, is a familiar poem to most readers and will perhaps become one of your favorites. Why do you suppose a poem about choosing between two roads should be so popular? One important question you will want to answer as you read this poem is: In what way does it express a conflict of values?

1. What is the basic situation of this poem? What do you think the two different roads might represent?

2. Why is the man so cautious in making his choice?

3. In what sense is making a choice between two roads, or a choice in any situation, no matter how insignificant, also making a value judgment?

13. "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen is reprinted below. It was written during World War I by a poet who was himself killed in that war one week before the Armistice was declared. The poem clearly intends to dissuade the reader from his previous belief in Horace's maxim about an honorable death; do you think it achieves that effect?

"Dulce Et Decorum Est"

(For text, see The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen; ed. C. Day Lewis. New Directions Publishing Co., New York, copyright Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1963.)

1. What is the effect of the first eight lines of this poem? How appropriate are words like "haunting" and "hoots"?

2. Why does the speaker compare the man's death with drowning? In what sense is the soldier "guttering"?

3. What does the speaker seem to be trying to do in the description of the dead man on the wagon? What is your reaction?

4. Why do you think the speaker waited until the end to declare that Horace's maxim is an "old Lie"?

14. "The Bloody Sire" by Robinson Jeffers, p. 531 in Immortal Poems, puts forth a surprising idea about the origin of the world's values. Do you think it has a convincing argument?

1. According to the speaker, why is the war he is watching not bad? Do you accept at first the statement that violence is the sire of the world's values?

2. What do you think is meant by the term "values" here?

3. What kinds of evidence does the poem offer to support its thesis? Do you disagree with any of the conclusions the speaker draws from any particular evidence?

4. Is the poem essentially optimistic about the outcome of the war, or is it on the whole pessimistic?

15. "An Outpost of Progress" by Joseph Conrad, p. 88 of Short Story Masterpieces, is a fairly long short story that presents the events which happen to two white men when they go into Africa to trade for ivory with the natives. They soon find that savagery has a distinct effect on their own civilized manners. One of the most important things to watch as you read the story, however, is the narrator, for it is he who holds the key to the values finally expressed by this work. The time of this story is the late nineteenth century when England was building her colonial empire in the method we see here. Do the methods the men use live up to the high aims of civilization expressed on page 96: to bring "light, and faith and commerce to the dark places of the earth"?

1. What force do Kayerts and Carlier represent? Are they the best possible representatives?

2. What is the force against which progress fights? How is it represented in the story?

3. Where does Makola fit in this struggle? Does he fully satisfy the requirements of either the side of civilization or that of savagery?

4. Trace the decline of Kayerts' and Carlier's values. What begins their hypocrisy and what ends it?

5. What does the narrator mean when he says the values of civilization are illusions (p. 105)? Does this mean that he agrees with Kayerts when he says all men are fools (p. 112)?

6. Exactly what is the narrator's view of the conflict? Which side is he on?

16. The last work you are asked to read in this unit is Billy Budd, Foretopman by Herman Melville, beginning on p. 57 in Six Great Modern Short Novels. This is a difficult novel, and you will perhaps have some trouble understanding the narrator. Also, as you read, you will find that the narrator makes what he calls "digressions," in which he talks about famous sea captains, which might seem to have nothing to do with the story. But you know that each part of a work is important, so you will want to discover what connection the digressions have to the theme of the whole book. Then, too, there are many historical references to the period just after the French Revolution when the sailors in England's navy rebelled against the conditions on board ship in what is called the Great Mutiny. Try to connect these events with others in the same period, such as the American Revolutionary War, so that you will understand why mutiny was considered such a serious crime. A third part of the book that you will need to pay particular attention to are the many literary and biblical allusions, to such people as Joseph and Ananias. When you come to such a reference, be sure you understand what the narrator means before you go on; a dictionary or encyclopedia will help a great deal.

The values in Billy Budd are many and complicated. You will find here, for example, an instance of the conflict between the hero and the villain, and between two societies--the natural and the ordered. Follow these conflicts throughout the work to find out which value gains dominance over the other.

1. What kind of character is Billy Budd? What incidents, for example, show his great innocence of worldly ways?

2. What kind of a man is Mr. Claggart? Why does he so immensely dislike the popular Billy?

3. Do you agree with Captain Vere that Billy must hang for what he did? Why or why not? What are Captain Vere's reasons? Are they in any way valid?

4. In the long argument over Billy's sentence, Captain Vere says that the problem is not a moral one, but a practical one (p. 130). Do you agree? Should the three officers of the drumhead court consider their moral scruples and the extenuating circumstances in sentencing Billy?

5. How can the law and morality be two different things? Are laws necessarily moral?

6. Why does the narrator spend such a long time talking about Captain Nelson and the Great Mutiny? Does the narrator seem to think that Billy should be hanged?

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THE USE AND OVERUSE OF LITERARY CONVENTION TEST

Literature Curriculum VI

Instructions to students:

Answers to the questions are to be recorded on the separate answer sheets provided. PLEASE BE SURE TO USE ONLY SIDE A OF THE ANSWER SHEET, THE SIDE THAT HAS ROOM FOR 5 CHOICES.

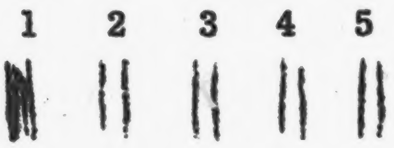
Use a soft lead pencil (#2 or softer) and completely fill the space between the lines for the response you choose as the correct answer. Your score on this test will be the number of correct answers you mark. There is only one best answer for each item.

Sample test item: Who is the chief executive of the United States Government ?

(1) The President
(2) The Secretary of State
(3) The Secretary of Defense
(4) The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

Since the correct answer is 1, the answer sheet is marked like this:

Sample test item:



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TE 000 219

I. Lyric Poetry

1. What are literary conventions?
   1) trite methods of handling familiar themes
   2) non-conformist literature for the inquisitive reader
   3) literary devices agreed upon between the author and the audience
   4) author's methods of sustaining suspense in an age-old plot

2. What is triteness?
   1) an old method of treating a new theme
   2) a new method of treating an old theme
   3) an old method of treating an old theme
   4) a new method of treating a new theme

3. Why is it difficult for individual readers to agree upon the degree of triteness in a piece of literature?
   1) The manner in which an old plot is presented varies in degree from writer to writer.
   2) Triteness the way an individual perceives is dependent upon his experiental background.
   3) Trite is a vaguely defined word and means something different to everyone.
   4) If something is considered to be literature of any degree, it is difficult to say it is trite.

4. What is the extended metaphor in "Anthem for Doomed Youth"?
   1) comparison of soldiers to battle
   2) comparison of the battle scene to a funeral
   3) comparison of life to a candle
   4) comparison of dusk and death

5. Which of the following lines from "Anthem for Doomed Youth" displays triteness more than any of the rest?

   What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
   Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
   Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
   Can patter out their hasty orisons.

   1) line 1
   2) line 2
   3) line 3
   4) line 4

6. What argument does Jeffers give in support of war?
   1) It makes men out of boys.
   2) It has led to the defeat of ill-purposed armies and leaders.
   3) A war makes it possible for man to enjoy peace.
   4) That The values of the world emanate from war.

7. Which statement best restates this couplet from "The Bloody Sire"?

   "What but the wolf's tooth chiseled so fine
   The fleet limbs of the antelope?"

   1) The antelope runs fast out of necessity.
   2) Wolves like to feed upon antelope.
   3) Antelopes are faster than wolves.
   4) Antelopes' limbs look chiseled.

8. In "Along the Paths O'Glory," Edgar Guest uses many words which bring about a stock response. Which one of the following words not only calls for this kind of response, but is also vague?
   1) freedom
   2) mother
   3) flags
   4) legions

9. In Edgar Guests, "Along the Paths of Glory," what literary convention other than triteness is overworked?
   1) hyperbole
   2) overwording
   3) metaphor
   4) sentimentality

10. What would you call the last four lines in the original version of Wordworth's "The Thorn"?

    "A cruel, cruel fire, they say,
    Into her bones was sent:
    It dried her body like a cinder,
    And almost turned her brain to tinder."

    1) simile.
    2) personification.
    3) hyperbole.
    4) metathesis.

11. "And I have travelled far as Hull to see
    What clothes he might have left, or other property."

    "And I have travelled weary miles to see
    If aught which he had owned might still remain for me."

    The second couplet is an improvement over the first because
    1) it sounds more poetic.
    2) it states the message more exactly.
    3) the end words rime better.
    4) it is more specific.

12. What error was made by both Matthew Arnold in eulogizing Shakespeare and James Whitcomb Riley in his eulogy for Longfellow?
    1) They overemphasized their literary ability.of the men they were writing about.
    2) They forgot their subjects were human like everyone else.
    3) They assumed that everyone else would be affected as they were by their subjects.
    4) They treated their subjects as persons who had great concern for the 'common man'.

13. If sentimentality means assigning to an idea or situation more emotion than it warrants, which of the following is least sentimental?
    1) "Then I felt like some watcher of the skies
       When some new planet swims into its ken;"
    2) "Thou...made the weak to be thy strong;
       By they melodious magic, changed the wrong
       To changeless right and joyed and wept as we."

3) and 4) on next page

3) "And thou, who dids't the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-schooled, self-scanned, self honored, self secure,
Dids't tread on earth unguessed at.

4) "God grant me faith to stand on guard,
Uncheered, unspoke, alone,
And see behind such duty hard
My service to the throne."

II. Short Stories

14. Which of the following best describes the plot of "Jim Bent, Deserter"?
1) pacifist versus militarist
2) a triangle of love
3) counter espionage
4) redemption and forgiveness

15. What was the relationship between Bent and Kane?
1) hometown buddies
2) friends
3) competitors for the affections of the Mayor's wife
4) rivals for rank

16. Why did Jim Bent desert?
1) because he was ashamed of his involvement with Mrs. Kane
2) to shield Kane's name
3) to avoid arrest for Kane's murder
4) because the Major's wife told him to desert

17. The most phony aspect of the story, "Jim Bent, Deserter" is
1) that he wounded Kane at just that time.
2) that Major Kane should confess when he did.
3) that the girl detective should fall in love with him.
4) that Jim Bent would be in the slums of New York.

18. Whereas nothing in "Jim Bent" has prepared us for thinking Bent a killer, we are prepared for Pepe's action in "Flight" by his
1) desire to be viewed as a man.
2) skill with a knife.
3) greed.
4) none of these

19. Which best describes the plot of "Flight"?
1) poetic justice
2) eternal triangle
3) family pride
4) cause and effect

20. What causes Pepé's death?
1) gangrene
2) fate
3) a shot
4) treachery

21. Which of the following might not be considered a trite phrase?
1) "The withered moon"
2) "Lady in question"
3) "Come to a head"
4) "His feelings came to the surface"

22. What is the significance to Pepé of the hatband and green handkerchief that he asks to wear to Monterey?
    1) They belonged to his father.
    2) They made him appear to be a man to his brother and sister.
    3) They made him feel more manly.
    4) They were a sign of wealth.

23. What does the story about Pepé indicate about the relationship between the mother and her son?
    1) The mother feels she must shield her son from reality.
    2) The son should be made to feel no responsibility to his home or family.
    3) The mother attempts to prepare her son as well as she knows how for the realities of the world.
    4) The mother does not want her son to become a man.

24. If Pepé had not killed a man but had just been leaving home to work on the east side of the mountains, undoubtedly Mama still would have been sad. Why?
    1) She knew Pepé was not yet a man.
    2) A departure from loved ones is always sad.
    3) She needed Pepé to help raise the younger children.
    4) She knew the past could not be recaptured.

25. What did Mama mean when she said, "A boy gets to be a man when a man is needed"?
    1) A boy becomes a man when he is old enough to go to Monterey alone.
    2) A boy is a man if he tries to act like a man.
    3) A boy becomes a man when he is old enough to dress like a man.
    4) A boy becomes a man when he is able to fulfill the responsibilities demanded of him.

III. Narrative Poetry

26. In the first stanza of "The Eve of St. Agnes" it is stated

    "___________and while his frosted breath,
    Like pious incense from a censer old,
    Seem'd taking flight for heaven, _________"

    What is being compared in the simile?
    1) frosted breath and heaven
    2) frosted breath and incense smoke
    3) frosted breath and piety
    4) incense smoke and flight

27. Upon which syllables is the stress placed in the second line quoted in item 26?
    1) the even syllables, i. e., 2nd, 4th ---- 10th
    2) the odd syllables, i. e., 1st, 3rd, ----9th
    3) the 2nd and 3rd, then 5th and 6th, then 8th and 9th
    4) The meter is irregular and is not described by any of the above.

28. What is the most imposing feature of the narrative poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes"?
    1) the plot
    2) the characters
    3) the religious festival associated with the story
    4) the manner in which it is related

29. What is most 'trite' about the poem?
    1) the plot
    2) the characters
    3) the religious implication of the day the story takes place
    4) the manner in which it is related

30. Why couldn't Porphyra attend the ball along with the other invited guests?
    1) He was of a lower social class.
    2) He only existed in Madeline's St. Agnes' dream.
    3) He was an infidel or unbeliever.
    4) His lineage was held in disfavor.

Stanza 7:

1 Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
2 The music, yearning like a god in pain,
3 She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
4 Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
5 Pass by--she heeded not at all: in vain
6 Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
7 And back retir'd, not cool'd by high disdain,
8 But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere:
9 She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

Items 31-33 are based upon this stanza.

31. Why doesn't the author think Madeline is rude or discourteous?
    1) She could not see or hear well.
    2) She was shy and afraid to look around her.
    3) She was filled with sadness.
    4) She was anticipating her dream.

32. What two figures of speech are employed in the first 2 1/2 lines?
    1) simile and synesthesis
    2) personification and simile
    3) metaphor and personification
    4) personification and synesthesis

33. In what line does Keats use a verb as an adjective?
    1) line 2
    2) line 4
    3) line 6
    4) line 7

34. The old lady during the time she is arranging for Porphyro to see Madeline says,

> "---Oh! thou must needs the lady wed,
> Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

What concern is she expressing in her statement?
1) That Madeline and Porphyro will be caught.
2) That Madeline and Porphyro will get married without their families' consent.
3) That she will be judged guilty of a sin.
4) That she will die soon.

35. What is the chief reason drama is highly conventionalized?
1) It is one of the oldest forms of literature.
2) It must be performed on a stage.
3) It must be shorter in length and therefore it is more difficult to develop a theme.
4) We cannot tell how people feel from what they say.

36. What advantage was Tennessee Williams attempting to secure by his change in dramatic form?
1) to write a play that would be [illegible] easily understood by the playgoers
2) to gain an opportunity to give insight into the characters in the play
3) to enable the viewer to see Amanda as a very superficial person
4) to show that escape from the reality of one's existence is foolish

37. Why is Tom a tragic figure?
1) He cannot escape because of his sensitivity.
2) He is insensitive to the needs of his mother and sister despite his love for them.
3) He is lazy and unwilling to exploit his abilities of which he has an abundance.
4) He has been misled by his co-workers at the warehouse because of his weak will.

38. The screen images serve as the purpose of
1) explanation of the action.
2) interruption of the action.
3) chapter headings.
4) cues to the audience.

39. Which quality would you say is most prominent in Amanda's characterization?
1) Southern drawl
2) bossiness
3) complaints
4) trite sayings

40. The glass, the jonquils, and the movies symbolize
1) frustration.
2) dream worlds.
3) impending tragedy.

41. What conflict does Tom experience regarding his father?
    1) He likes him for being his father but dislikes him because he deserted him.
    2) He likes him for having escaped but resents him because this prevents his own escape.
    3) He likes him because his mother loved him but dislikes him because he left her.
    4) He doesn't know whether he should like him or not.

42. What does Amanda suffer from most?
    1) allusions
    2) delusions
    3) elusions
    4) defensiveness

43. What is implied by Tom when he says, "The warehouse is where I work, not where I know things about people!"?
    1) They work the people so hard they don't have time to get acquainted.
    2) He has no interest in other people.
    3) He finds little interest or challenge in the job.
    4) He considers himself better than those he works with.

44. Why does the play end on a note of futility?
    1) because Amanda is still poor
    2) because Tom is leaving home
    3) because Laura did not get married
    4) because Tom could not escape completely

45. Why is Laura's glass menagerie so important to her?
    1) She is mentally retarded and it is therapy.
    2) It provides her with an income.
    3) She likes to collect things.
    4) It provides her with an emotional outlet.